# A BRIEF GLIMPSE OF BLUE:
# EXAMINING THE PARTICIPATION AND POLITICAL EFFECTS OF 21ST-CENTURY ELECTION REFORM IN NORTH CAROLINA

by

John Thomas Roddey Holder

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Approved by:

_____
Dr. Martha E. Kropf

_____
Dr. Scott Fitzgerald

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Dr. Eric Heberlig

_____
Dr. David Swindell

# ABSTRACT

JOHN THOMAS RODDEY HOLDER. A brief glimpse of blue: examining the participation and political effects of 21st-century election reform in North Carolina. (Under the direction of DR. MARTHA E. KROPF)

This study examines registration, voting and election results in the presidential elections from 1992 to 2012. During this period, North Carolina introduced a series of election reforms which were designed to increase political participation by making registration and voting more widely accessible. These reforms included making One Stop early voting and absentee voting by mail universally available, and making it possible to register and vote in a single step at an early voting site. This study examines the implementation of these reforms by county boards of elections, and the effects which they have had on voter participation and on election results. The study finds that election reform has coincided with an increase in voter turnout, and produced a short-term advantage for the Democratic Party.

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my mother, Angela Roddey Holder, LL.M., and two of my mentors in the field of political science, Dr. Caroline Arden and Dr. Lee Sigelman.

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| | |
|---|---|
| B | black |
| D | Democrat, Democratic |
| ED | Election Day |
| EDR | Election Day registration |
| MSE | mean standard error |
| N/A | not applicable/not available |
| NEAV | no-excuse absentee voting by mail |
| NP | nonprecinct (voting other than at the polling place on Election Day) |
| O | other (voter registered with party other than Democratic or Republican) |
| OS | One Stop (voting) |
| Pct. | percent, percentage |
| R | Republican |
| Reg. | registered, registration |
| RV | registered voters |
| SDR | same day registration |
| U | unaffiliated (registered voter) |
| VAP | voting age population |
| W | white |

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Public policy in the United States is largely determined by the outcomes of elections. Election outcomes are greatly affected by which potential voters are able and willing to participate, and which are not. Therefore, the question of who votes, and who does not, has significant implications for public policy, and for American democracy in general. An individual's ability to participate in the voting process may depend on the conditions and requirements for doing so, while one's willingness to participate is affected by behavioral and attitudinal factors which may not be addressed simply by structural changes making the process of registration and voting less complicated or more easily accessible. Numerous federal court decisions have held that the fundamental right to vote is guaranteed and protected by the U.S. Constitution, but in the decentralized system of American government, the conditions and requirements for exercising that right are largely enacted by state legislatures and almost entirely implemented by state and local election authorities (Hasen 2005). Thus, individual circumstances and institutional factors both play a role in determining whether one participates in voting, or does not.

Much of the contemporary intellectual debate about the issue of voter (non)participation centers around whether institutional or behavioral factors are more responsible for nonvoting. If structural impediments are the primary reason for nonvoting, then removing these impediments will result in greater turnout and a participating electorate which is more demographically representative of the population

as a whole. If attitudinal factors are primarily responsible, then changing the process will not increase participation among those who choose to abstain. As will be discussed herein, much of the scholarship on an individual's decision whether to vote (beginning with Downs 1957) frames it in terms of a cost-benefit analysis. It is argued that if the individual perceives the benefits of voting to exceed the costs, he will vote; if he perceives the costs to exceed the benefits, he will abstain.

Institutional or structural change which makes the process easier reduces the costs of voting, while changing the potential voter's attitude, perhaps by giving him the opportunity to vote for a candidate about whom he is sufficiently enthusiastic, increases the benefits. The present research will approach the question primarily from the institutional perspective, arguing that a significant positive effect on participation can be achieved through legal and procedural reforms which increase opportunities to vote. This may include easing requirements for registration, lifting restrictions on absentee voting by mail, and increasing the amount of time and the number of locations which an individual has available to cast his vote in person. Beginning in 2000, the state of North Carolina sequentially implemented each of these reforms; however, in 2013, legislation was enacted repealing Same Day voter registration (North Carolina General Statutes 163-82.6A); curbing the number of days available for early voting (while requiring sites to be operated for the same number of hours as in previous elections; North Carolina General Statutes 163-227.2), while not affecting eligibility requirements for absentee voting by mail (North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2013-381). This legislation, and its possible effects, will be discussed in the concluding chapter of the work.

This research will examine the implementation of these reforms, and their political and participation effects in the four most recent presidential elections. The reforms to be examined are One Stop absentee voting (also known as in-person early voting), which was first made universally available in the presidential election of 2000; eligibility of registered voters to cast absentee ballots by mail without providing an excuse, initially enacted in 2004; and same day registration, which allows a potential voter to register and vote in a single step during the early voting period[1], beginning in 2008. (No new reforms were enacted in 2012.) The present research will examine the extent to which each of these reforms, individually and in combination, have affected participation and partisan voting patterns in presidential elections in the state. The effects (and effectiveness) of the reforms depends largely on the manner in which they are implemented by county election authorities, whose resources for doing so are largely determined by Boards of County Commissioners. This may lead to disparities between counties; for example, while the Board of Elections is responsible for determining the number, location, and hours of operation of the county's One Stop voting sites, the Board of Commissioners determines the funding available for the operation of elections, which includes the resources necessary to operate the One Stop sites.

Kimball and Kropf (2006) argue that appropriate levels of funding are necessary for proper administration of elections, but that local county governments do not generally regard this as a high priority. This would lead to the conclusion that a lack of necessary

[1] Some other states allow registration and voting in a single step during both the early voting period and on Election Day, but North Carolina was the first to allow same day registration only during early voting. Those who wish to vote on Election Day must still register 25 days in advance. This means that same day registrants are by definition early voters, which allows for an examination of the effects of this reform in North Carolina in ways which are not possible in most other electoral jurisdictions. Same day registration, however, was abolished in North Carolina by legislation enacted in 2013.

funds may inhibit the successful implementation of reforms designed to facilitate greater access to the polls; as will be discussed later in this work, greater access is perceived by both parties to benefit Democratic candidates, and thus Republican-controlled county legislative authorities might be particularly reluctant to devote large amounts of resources to, for example, the operation of early voting sites over a period of several weeks preceding an election.

The research questions to be examined are as follows: How have these recent election reforms been implemented by North Carolina county authorities? To what extent have these reforms been carried out differently in different jurisdictions? How have these reforms, in their substance and in their implementation, affected voter participation and partisan voting patterns in presidential elections? Can these reforms be shown to have caused increased voter registration and turnout? And have these results varied across counties as a result of any observed differences in implementation? In particular, have the results varied according to different levels of support for implementation provided by Democratic- and Republican-controlled Boards of County Commissioners?

With respect to the turnout effect of election reform, of particular interest is whether these effects have been observed among members of traditionally disenfranchised and nonparticipatory groups, such as the poor, the less well-educated, and members of racial minority groups. If the reforms have achieved the latter result, has it caused significant change in the demographic composition of the state's electorate, making the pool of voters more closely representative of the population of the state as a whole? And have these reforms had an effect on the partisan outcomes of presidential elections in the state? For example, to what extent can these reforms be shown to have

contributed to Barack Obama's victory in North Carolina in 2008? Given that Obama narrowly failed to repeat his success in the state in his 2012 re-election bid, can these reforms be seen to have had a long-term partisan effect, or were they simply practices which had a particular impact in a unique set of election circumstances, but have no long-term appeal or effect? And what might the curtailment of these reforms mean for political participation by groups of traditional nonvoters?

The work will be based on the legal-institutional theory of political participation, which explains nonparticipation as primarily the result of procedural barriers, rather than the behavioral theory of nonvoting.[2] The institutional argument holds that the more complicated the process of registration and voting is, the less likely some individuals will be to participate in it. Therefore, easing or removing these barriers – such as North Carolina's reforms allowing registration and voting in a single step during early voting, expanding the time available for casting one's vote, and removing the restrictions on being able to vote away from one's polling place on a designated Election Day – should increase turnout. If the institutional theory holds true, then the reforms should produce this expected result, if they are implemented as intended.

The behavioral theory, conversely, holds that nonparticipation may result from factors such as an individual's perception of his lack of a stake in the political system, low political efficacy, and disillusionment or alienation, which lead to a decision not to vote. This theory posits that the necessary conditions for many potential voters to actually participate include mobilization by political organizations (Jackson 1996), and the existence of what the would-be voters perceive to be a meaningful choice being made

[2] The definitions are those used by Piven and Cloward (2000).

available to them (Southwell 1986). In the absence of these conditions, procedural voting reforms would be expected to have a minimal effect on turnout, and the answer to the perceived problem of large-scale nonparticipation lies beyond the political system's ability to solve it simply by making the process of registration and voting easier. The present work will argue, consistent with the legal-institutional theory, that procedural reform can, in fact, have a significant effect on political participation, and has indeed done so in North Carolina. However, the effectiveness of these reforms in increasing turnout may be affected by differential implementation of them.

Much of the literature on voting and nonvoting is derived from Downs' (1957) conception that a rational individual will, essentially, make an economic decision in deciding whether to vote or abstain: Do the costs of voting outweigh the benefits? Both the institutional and behavioral theories can be applied here. Those for whom the "costs" are high will not vote, nor will those for whom the perceived benefits (to oneself or to society) are low. Downs (1957) argues that the costs are highest, and the perceived benefits lowest, for low-income citizens who are most likely to find onerous the process of obtaining the information and complying with the requirements (time, registration, travel to the polls, the act of voting itself), while the costs are lowest and the benefits highest (and thus voting is most likely) for higher-income citizens with easier access to information, greater skill in navigating the process, and a greater sense that they will derive benefit from participation.

Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980) expand on Downs' argument by distinguishing between a self-interested "instrumental benefit" and the "expressive benefit" of having fulfilled one's sense of civic duty. Again, these perceived benefits are greater for those

who believe themselves to have a greater stake in the system, and "[p]eople with political *resources* can more easily bear the cost of voting." (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, p. 8, emphasis in original) Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) elaborate on the "resource model" by arguing that participation requires resources which are addressed by both institutional factors (e.g., having the time to vote) and behavioral (e.g., development of civic skills). Structural reform may be both necessary and sufficient to facilitate participation by some voters, while it is necessary but not sufficient for others. This argument will be explored in greater detail later in this work. The differential effects of socioeconomic status, such as income and education, will be incorporated into the model, and will be used to examine the behavioralist argument that election reform which addresses structural but not attitudinal factors actually increases the stratification of the electorate, rather than making it more representative of the population as a whole.

Reforms to widen access to electoral participation have been advocated as a means of increasing traditionally low U.S. voter turnout (Hansen 2001; Fortier 2004; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum and Miller 2007), to reduce the "costs" of voting (time, travel to polling place, and administrative concerns) for nonvoters and those who participate only occasionally, and to provide for more accurate and secure elections (Gronke and Toffey 2008). Another goal is to facilitate participation by members of traditionally underrepresented groups, making the voting population more representative of the population as a whole (Rosenfield 1994). This would make the results of elections a more accurate expression of the views of the entire electorate. Ideally, American democracy should be stronger if the reforms accomplish these goals. In addition, to the extent that increased participation affects the results of elections and the popular choice

of leaders, these reforms will have larger implications for public policy, because elections ultimately determine the policies which the elected members of government pursue and adopt. These issues therefore pose significant questions to be explored within the fields of political science and public policy, and the present research seeks to make an intellectual and policy contribution to these fields of inquiry by exploring and assessing both the effectiveness and impact of these policies, and their implementation, which is a vital part of the policy process.

This work posits that the eligible voting population can be divided into five groups: those who regularly vote without prompting or assistance; those who never vote nor express an interest in doing so, regardless of the ease of the process or the candidate choices made available to them; nonvoters who would potentially participate only if structural barriers pertaining to registration and voting were minimized or completely removed; nonvoters who would potentially participate only if they were mobilized, in ways including assistance with registration, contact from a campaign representing a candidate the otherwise-nonvoter was willing to make the effort to support, and assistance in getting to the polls or obtaining an absentee ballot; and nonvoters who would potentially participate only in both the presence of mobilization efforts and the absence of structural obstacles.

The latter three groups are the focus of this work, for they, and not the first two, are the ones whose behavior may change as a result of the reforms examined herein.

> [S]omeone who is almost certain to vote, like the person who is almost certain not to vote, is probably relatively unaffected by small changes in the benefits, costs, or resources of participation. (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, p. 10)

How, then, do "small changes in the benefits, costs or resources of participation" affect those who are not certain either to vote or to abstain? Different reforms may vary in their effects on different individuals or groups, particularly if the ways in which the reforms are implemented also vary.

The institutional theory would explain increased turnout if it is observed among the third group; the behavioral theory would explain increased turnout if it is observed among the fourth; and both theories would contribute to an understanding of increased turnout if it is observed among the fifth. Indeed, the necessary combination of institutional and behavioral factors which would be necessary to change the political behavior of the last group mentioned requires a framework which draws upon both of the existing theories, and which might provide a third theoretical perspective specific to the unique characteristics of that segment of the populations. This third perspective will be discussed later in this work.

The present study encompasses the presidential elections of 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008 and 2012, with data from 1992 included for comparison purposes. The work will examine the enactment and implementation of each reform in North Carolina. The study uses publicly available county-level data from the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections on voter registration, voter turnout, voting method, the partisan composition of county commissions during each election year, the number of One Stop voting sites opened in each county in each year, and presidential election results[3]. Multivariate regression will be used to examine the extent to which

[3] Voter registration data includes the race and partisanship of registrants and voters. Voting method data includes Election Day precinct voting, absentee by mail, or in-person early voting. Provisional, curbside and transfer ballots are included in the dataset but are excluded from the analysis because the method by

changes in turnout, demographics, and results can be explained by the effects of each type of reform, and their implementation. A cross-sectional panel study format will be used to assess the impact of these reforms across the elections being examined, with 1996 as the last election before any of the reforms were adopted.

The three reforms were introduced sequentially. The 1996 election serves effectively as a pre-test, pre-reform baseline. In that election, One Stop early voting was offered by some counties but not required statewide, those who wished to vote absentee were required to meet certain criteria, and eligibility to vote required registration 30 days in advance of Election Day. Each of these conditions changed in subsequent elections. As mentioned above, 2000 was the first presidential election with universally available One Stop early voting, 2004 the first with no excuse absentee voting by mail (NEAV), and 2008 the first with same day registration (SDR). This allows for an analysis of the effects of each reform in sequence and combination: One Stop in 2000; One Stop + NEAV in 2004; and One Stop + NEAV + SDR in 2008 and 2012.

The analysis will thus consider the effects of the first reform in the second election examined, the first two reforms in the third election, and all three reforms in the fourth and fifth. The major dependent variables for the study of participation effects will be the turnout percentage of voting age population, turnout percentage of registered voters, and registration percentage of voting age population in each county. Voter registration will be distinguished by party to determine whether the effects differ for self-

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which they were cast cannot be determined. The partisan composition of county commissions was determined through an analysis of election returns for individual commission races where available. Where these data were not available, contemporaneous newspaper accounts to determine the partisan affiliation of individual commissioners. Sources for these accounts include *The Charlotte Observer*, *The* (Raleigh) *News & Observer*, the Asheville *Citizen-Times,* the Greensboro *News & Record*, the *Winston-Salem Journal*, and the Greenville *Daily Reflector*. Election results are categorized by method of voting where available.

identified Democrats and Republicans. The dependent variable for the study of partisan effects will be the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote in each county in each election, with separate consideration of each method of voting (Election Day and nonprecinct, which is separated into One Stop and absentee by mail where the data were available). Again, changes in these results (for each method) will be used to determine the effects of the various reforms. Partisan control of each county commission during each election will be incorporated into the models to determine whether this has a differential effect on implementation, with a dependent variable representing the percentage of the vote which is cast nonprecinct in each election, and an independent variable representing the relative availability of One Stop voting in each county.

## Original Contributions of This Work to the Literature

The anticipated contributions of this work to the literature are as follows. The paper will examine whether the observed effects of each of these reforms are long-term; transitory; or only applicable under certain circumstances, particularly those defined by political context or variations in county-level implementation. This has significance for an evaluation of the success of these policy changes.

As noted above, elections are administered, and election policies implemented, at the state and local level. In North Carolina, it is primarily the case that county authorities administer and implement decisions made at the state level. While elections officials themselves are (at least nominally) nonpartisan, both state and county Boards of Election (who determine the choice of those officials) are weighted in favor of the political party of the incumbent governor. Kimball, Kropf and Battles (2006) and Kropf, Vercellotti and Kimball (2013) argue that, in some cases, the partisanship of election authorities may

affect their implementation of requirements such as those related to provisional voting. Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan (2011) find that many local election officials believe that reforms such as election day registration and early voting add to the administrative burdens of their duties, which may have implications for the manner in which those officials implement the reforms.

North Carolina is an important case to examine because it appears to be an exception to the generally observed pattern that early voting depresses turnout. The work will explore why this is the case. North Carolina experienced the nation's largest growth in voter turnout between 2004 and 2008, at a time when early voting was rapidly growing in popularity and same day registration was being introduced. Therefore, it provides a valuable case study of the potential impact of these reforms on participation.

As will be discussed further in the literature review portion of this work, most previous research has indicated that early voting has marginal, mixed or even negative effects on turnout[4]. A good deal of work has found that early voting makes it easier and more likely for previous participants to vote again, but that it does little to bring in new voters or to increase voting rates among members of groups which are traditionally less likely to participate, such as African-Americans[5]. North Carolina clearly seems to be an exception to these findings, as turnout in general and One Stop turnout specifically have increased in every presidential elections where One Stop has been available. One Stop is now the preferred method of voting for a majority of North Carolinians, and the

[4] See, for example, Stein (1998); Hansen (2001); Gans (2004); Fitzgerald (2005); Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum and Miller (2007); Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan (2009); Leighley and Nagler (2009).

[5] See, for example, Berinsky, Burns and Traugott (2001); Neeley and Richardson (2001); Berinsky (2005); Fitzgerald (2005); Giammo and Brox (2008); Leighley and Nagler (2009); Rigby and Springer (2010); Larocca and Klemanski (2011); Stein, Owens and Leighley (2003).

percentage of registered black voter turnout exceeded that for whites in 2008. This research will examine why North Carolina appears to be different, or was different in this particular case.

North Carolina is also an important case to examine because it appears that early voting and other reforms at least temporarily contributed to a Republican "red" Southern state becoming Democratic "blue" on the presidential level in 2008. While the effects of general demographic change in the state's population cannot be understated, this is a valuable case in which to examine the particular partisan effects of election reform. The result in 2008 may have been affected by differential implementation of election laws, or by the fact that the mobilization efforts by the Barack Obama campaign were greater and more successful in North Carolina than those of recent previous Democratic presidential nominees. The sequential nature of the introduction of these reforms in North Carolina makes it possible to analyze the effects of each reform individually.

The research on Election Day/same day registration indicates that turnout increases as restrictions (advance deadlines or otherwise) decrease, but that this has no consistent partisan effects (e.g., Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). Again, North Carolina's clear Democratic advantage in SDR in 2008 is an exception, and the present research will seek to determine why this is the case. North Carolina's status as the first state to offer same day registration during early voting but not on Election Day will also allow the study to make original contributions to the existing body of work in this field.

This study incorporates the registration and election data for 2012. This will facilitate the production of one of the first analyses of that election in North Carolina, as well as a comparison of the different results of 2008 and 2012: Did the reforms help

Obama win the first time, but fail to do so the second? And, if so, why was this the case? Did these reforms have a long-term systemic effect, or were they, in this case, a short-term phenomenon produced by the unique political, mobilization and implementation circumstances of the 2008 election?

This is a case study of one particular type of election in one 16-year time period in one state. The nature of this study means that its findings cannot necessarily be generalized to states other than North Carolina, to primary elections as distinct from general elections, or to elections other than those for President (other federal elections, state or local elections, or elections nor occurring in the presidential year, when participation is highest). However, much of the previous work in this area has similarly taken a state-level case study approach[6], and this work will contribute to that body of literature.

## The History of Recent Election Reform in North Carolina

Over the period being examined, the traditionally required practice of registering by a deadline in advance of an election, and then visiting one's assigned neighborhood polling place during a given time period on a single Election Day, has been supplemented by a variety of options for registration and voting in other venues. In addition to these traditional methods, North Carolinians may now vote in person at a wide variety of locations during an extended period in advance of Election Day; cast an absentee ballot by mail without restriction; and, until 2013, could register and vote in a single act during

[6] See, for example, state-level explorations of election reform in Florida, following the controversial 2000 presidential election (Gronke, Bishin et al. 2005; Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum c. 2007); Nevada, which has one of the nation's highest rates of early voting (Dyck and Gimpel 2009; Dyck, Gaines and Shaw 2009); and Texas, where in-person early voting originated and remains highly popular (Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997; Stein 1998; Stein, Owens and Leighley 2003; Haag 2010).

the early voting period preceding Election Day, rather than being required to register as much as a month before actually casting one's ballot (although, as previously noted, voting on Election Day still requires registration at least 25 days in advance).

## One Stop Early Voting

In-person early voting, known in North Carolina as "One Stop" absentee voting, originated in Texas in 1963 (Rosenfield 1994), and was available in some areas of North Carolina as early as 1973, when voters in certain counties could cast ballots in advance of Election Day by visiting their County Board of Elections office and presenting documentation of a reason (such as absence, illness, or disability) for being unable to vote at the conventional time and place (Zebrowski 2003). This option was made available on a statewide basis in 1987, though an excuse for absence from the polls was still required (Jones 1992). Removing the excuse requirement was considered as early as 1992 (Rawlins 1993), but was not achieved until 1999, when the "One Stop in person" absentee voting option was made available in general elections of even-numbered years for all voters without excuse, effective in 2000 (Session Law 1999-455, NCGS 163-226).

The county Board of Elections could elect to open additional One Stop voting sites at other locations in the county, and a county voter may cast a ballot at any one of these locations at any time during the early voting period. For the 2000 general election, a total of 58 satellite locations were approved in 31 counties by the State Board of Elections, which appropriated a total of $250,000 to assist county boards with their operation and maintenance, with no county eligible for more than $15,000 (Johnson and Morrill 2000; Sandford 2000). The remaining 69 counties chose not to open satellite sites, but to limit One Stop voting to the Board of Elections office, primarily due to

budgetary or staffing constraints (Johnson and Morrill 2000). The One Stop voting option without excuse was extended to primary elections in 2001 (Session Law 2001-337, NCGS 163-226). The One Stop legislation was unsuccessfully challenged in court as a violation of the Constitutional requirement that all votes in federal elections be cast on a common Election Day (Johnson and Morrill 2000; Wayne 2000).

The availability of One Stop voting expanded slightly in 2004, grew significantly in 2008, and actually declined in 2012. In addition to the consistent availability of One Stop voting at the county Board of Elections or an alternate site, in 2004, 35 counties operated a total of 99 satellite sites; in 2008, 77 counties operated a total of 269 satellites; and in 2012, 71 counties operated a total of 263 satellites. Nineteen counties did not operate satellites during any of the elections examined; eight used satellites only in 2008; and nine others reduced their number of satellites between 2008 and 2012[7]. In no case could it be determined from the available data that a reduction in the availability of satellite sites was related to a change in partisan control of the county commission.

As of 2012, North Carolina was one of 32 states, in addition to the District of Columbia, where early voting is available (National Conference of State Legislatures 2012). Since it was made universally available, One Stop voting has grown substantially in popularity in North Carolina, to the extent that it is now the preference of a majority of voters, as demonstrated by the following table:

[7] Analysis by the author of data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

TABLE 1.1: Votes cast by method (percentage of votes cast), North Carolina presidential elections, 2000-2012.

| YEAR | ELECTION DAY | ONE STOP | MAIL |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2000 | 2,449,448 (84.5%) | 394,158 (13.6%) | 53,286 (1.9%) |
| 2004 | 2,437.049 (70.3%) | 707,636 (20.4%) | 322,077 (9.2%) |
| 2008 | 1,809,166 (40.3%) | 2,411,116 (53.7%) | 264,993 (6.1%) |
| 2012 | 1,833,545 (40.7%) | 2,527,611 (54.6%) | 218,303 (4.7%) |

Sources: Niolet and Khanna (2004); Johnson (2004); Bartlett and Degraffenreid (2009). Some data compiled by the author from information supplied by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and individual county Boards of Elections. Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding.

North Carolina now produces one of the nation's five highest totals of votes cast early (Fortier 2004; Gronke et al. 2009)[8]. While a 1973 study indicated that North Carolina then had the second-lowest percentage of registration of eligible voters in the United States (as cited in Bass and DeVries 1995), it exhibited the nation's highest increase in voter turnout from the 2004 to 2008 elections (News & Observer 2008); as illustrated above, the bulk of this increase has occurred in One Stop voting, rather than increases in traditional Election Day polling place voting or absentee voting by mail. Therefore, an examination of the effects of election reforms is appropriately focused primarily on One Stop voting.

At the time that universal early voting was debated in the General Assembly, it was largely supported by Democrats and largely opposed by Republicans; both parties apparently believed that it would disproportionately benefit potential Democratic voters. This view is not limited to North Carolina (Kimball and Kropf 2006; Kimball, Kropf and Battles 2006; Kropf, Vercellotti and Kimball 2013). At the time of its initial implementation, however, several journalistic analyses argued that the new procedure had no inherent partisan advantage, but would benefit whichever party was able to take

[8] The other states in this category are Texas, Tennessee, Florida and Georgia.

advantage of it through superior mobilization (Christensen 2000; Morrill 2000; Pilla 2000).

## No-Excuse Absentee Voting by Mail

In 2001, the state enacted no excuse absentee voting by mail, no longer requiring a citizen to meet one of a specified set of conditions, such as being absent from one's home precinct on Election Day, in order to be eligible to vote by mail in advance of the election, rather than at the traditional time and place (Session Law 2001-337, NCGS 163-226). However, the lifting of these restrictions has not resulted in a substantial increase in mail voting as has been observed with One Stop. Absentee by mail has become a distant third choice of voting method, well behind One Stop and traditional Election Day polling place voting. Fortier (2004) categorizes North Carolina as one of five states with high levels of in-person early voting and low levels of absentee voting by mail[9]. It is worthy of note that the use of absentee voting by mail grew substantially in 2004, the first election in which an excuse was not required, but has since declined. It appears that the relative popularity of this particular method of voting was short-lived.

## Same Day Voter Registration

In 2007, North Carolina enacted universally available same day voter registration (SDR), allowing an eligible citizen to register and vote in a single act at a One Stop voting station (Session Law 2007-253, NCGS 163-254); SDR had been available since 2001 for military personnel and certain other categories of voters. The registration deadline remained the same, 25 days before an election, for voters who wish to register by mail and vote on Election Day; thus, voters who registered through the One Stop

[9] The others are Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia.

procedure were then immediately required to vote at the early voting station, because they did not meet the registration deadline in time to vote on Election Day. As mentioned above, until 2013, North Carolina permitted same day registration during the early voting period, but not on Election Day itself. Thus, some early voters in 2008 and 2012 were not registered prior to their participation in that election, while all Election Day voters were registered at least 25 days in advance. This distinction allows for an exploration of whether same-day registrants, who are by definition new voters and One Stop voters, differ demographically or politically from their counterparts who participate at a traditional polling place on the traditional day.

## A Brief Political History of North Carolina

North Carolina is today one of the most politically competitive states in in the nation. Like the other former Confederate states, it became overwhelmingly Democratic after the end of Reconstruction, the return of many former Confederates to political power, and the elimination of the Republican Party as a political force throughout most of the region. But while it was part of the Democratic "Solid South," North Carolina was never as monolithically Democratic as other Southern states; pockets of Republican strength had existed since the party's founding prior to the Civil War in the mountainous west, where there were little agriculture, few slaves, and little support for secession (Key 1949). Black North Carolinians' voting rights and service in elective office survived the end of Reconstruction. During the last quarter of the 19th Century, 77 black members served in the General Assembly, four in the U.S. House of Representatives, and a number were elected to local offices. A Republican-Populist "fusion" coalition, with black

support, gained control of the General Assembly in 1894, and a Republican governor was elected in 1896 (Thompson 2002).

Democrats returned to power in the General Assembly in 1898 and regained the governorship in 1900, and quickly moved to disenfranchise the black population which had provided a significant amount of the Republican and Fusion support. A voter registration requirement was enacted, with passage of a literacy test required to register; most illiterate whites' voting power was preserved by a clause exempting from the test those whose grandfathers had been eligible to vote in 1867 (Bass and DeVries 1995; Luebke 1998; Thompson 2002). These provisions reduced voting participation from 85% of the eligible black population in the 1890's to a registration rate of only 5% in 1940 (Thompson 2002).

Forty of North Carolina's 100 counties had literacy tests in place and less than 50% turnout of eligible voters in the 1964 presidential election; this made them subject to the provisions of Section Five of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, which suspended the literacy test among other requirements. (The literacy test was permanently abolished nationwide when the Voting Rights Act was renewed in 1970.) In these 40 counties, black voter registration rose from 32.4% in 1965 to 54% in 1976. Nonetheless, registration rates among North Carolina's black voters continued to trail those of their white counterparts into the 1990's (Thompson 2002).

As stated above, the Republican Party never completely disappeared from North Carolina. The state supported Herbert Hoover over Democrat Al Smith in the 1928 presidential election, and Charlotte and its environs have sent Republicans to the U.S. House without interruption since 1952. As was the case elsewhere in the South,

Republican strength gradually grew in the 1960's, leading to presidential victories in the state by Richard M. Nixon in both 1968 and 1972 (Lamis 1990; Bass and DeVries 1995; Black and Black 2002). However, the national Republican coalition changed during the first part of the 20th Century; by the modern era, the party which had been founded to oppose slavery and secession, and which enjoyed the overwhelming support of newly-enfranchised black voters in the decades following the Civil War, saw its support in the South grow among whites as it shrank among blacks:

> When the Republican Party nominated Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater – one of the few northern senators who had opposed the Civil Rights Act – as their presidential candidate in 1964, the party attracted many racist southern whites but permanently alienated African-American voters. (Black and Black 2002)

On a statewide level, the two-party breakthrough came on the heels of Nixon's landslide re-election in 1972, with the election of James Holshouser and Jesse Helms as the first Republicans in the 20th Century to serve as governor and U.S. senator, respectively (Bass and DeVries 1995). Since then, both parties have demonstrated significant strength. North Carolina elects its statewide officials concurrently with presidential elections; since 1968, Republican presidential candidates have carried the state ten of 12 times, while Democrats have captured the governorship eight times; on six of these occasions, the state simultaneously voted for a Republican president and a Democratic governor[10]. Helms held his Senate seat for five terms (though often by narrow margins after heated, expensive campaigns), and was succeeded for one term by fellow Republican Elizabeth Dole.

[10] North Carolina voted Republican for both president and governor in 1972, 1984, 1988 and 2012; Democratic for both offices in 1976 and 2008; and for a Republican president and a Democratic governor in 1968, 1980, and without interruption from 1992 through 2004. Data compiled by the author.

Meanwhile, the state's U.S. House delegation remained majority Democratic without interruption until 1994, and the other U.S. Senate seat changed partisan hands in five consecutive elections beginning in 1980[11]. In the General Assembly, Republicans gained control of the House of Representatives for two terms beginning in 1994, and a Republican faction joined with Democrats in a short-lived power-sharing arrangement (resulting in the election of Democratic and Republican co-Speakers of the House) in 2003. The Senate remained Democratic from the late 19th Century until 2010, when the national tide delivered both houses to the Republicans (Congressional Quarterly 1995; Rice and Damico 2003; Barone and Cohen 2007; Brokaw 2010). The Democratic Party has historically dominated voter registration in the state, though this has in no way meant a consistent Democratic advantage in election results; rather, it has meant that many nominal Democrats have ignored their party registration to support Republican candidates such as Nixon, Helms and Ronald Reagan; indeed, Helms owed many of his election victories to the support of these "Jessecrats" (Luebke 1998).

The civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's led to the legal and political empowerment of black citizens nationwide, with particular effect in the Southern states where they had been disenfranchised and deprived of other rights. As noted above, black voter registration substantially increased in North Carolina following the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; as southern whites flocked to their region's newly-invigorated Republican Party, newly-enfranchised southern black voters even more

[11] Democratic Sen. Robert B. Morgan was defeated by Republican John P. East in 1980. East died in office in 1986, and his appointed Republican successor, James T. Broyhill, lost to Democrat Terry Sanford later that year. Republican Lauch Faircloth defeated Sanford in 1992 and subsequently lost to Democrat John Edwards in 1998. Edwards did not seek re-election in 2004, and was succeeded by Republican Richard Burr.

enthusiastically joined the Democratic Party, whose leadership had been primarily responsible for the enactment of much of the era's civil rights legislation (Black and Black 2002).

As black political strength grew during the 1980's and 1990's, North Carolina was the site of a substantial amount of voting rights litigation challenging practices which had traditionally discriminated against black voters. The Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1982 made it necessary only to demonstrate that an electoral practice had a discriminatory effect against traditionally disenfranchised groups, rather than having to prove discriminatory intent, in order to challenge it on the grounds that it provided minority groups with "less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the political process, and to elect representatives of their choice" (Public Law 97-205). Under this Act, in *Thornburg v. Gingles* (478 U.S. 30 [1986]), the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously struck down part of the state's districting plan for the General Assembly, holding that it impermissibly diluted the votes of black citizens.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Justice, with "preclearance" authority over the state's Congressional districting plans, interpreted the 1982 Amendments and the subsequent *Gingles* decision as requiring the creation of the maximum possible number of "majority-minority" districts, those in which African-Americans constituted a majority of the population, with the objective of electing black officials to the General Assembly and the U.S. House, among other offices. In the Congressional redistricting following the 1990 Census (in which North Carolina gained a twelfth House seat), the Department refused to preclear a plan creating only one black-majority district, on the grounds that the size of the state's black population made it possible to create two, reflecting black

political strength in both urban and rural areas of the state (O'Rourke 1997). A plan was subsequently enacted creating two black-majority districts, resulting in the election of the state's first two black U.S. Representatives since 1902 (Barone and Ujifusa 1993). However, the districts were challenged by white voters on Fourteenth Amendment equal protection grounds, and the Congressional redistricting plans were repeatedly litigated during the 1990's[12]. Differing U.S. Supreme Court decisions in these cases led to the state's conducting its Congressional elections under four different districting plans in the six elections beginning in 1992. It should be noted, however, that black Democratic Representative Melvin L. Watt, originally elected from the 12th District when it had a black majority, retained the seat even after the subsequent redistricting orders reduced its black percentage to as low as 36% in 1998 (Christensen and Fleer 1999; Congressional Quarterly 2001).

After Jimmy Carter's victory in 1976, no other Democratic presidential candidate carried North Carolina until Barack Obama in 2008, and neither Carter nor Obama succeeded in winning the state again in their re-election bids. Some Democratic losses were narrow; Carter lost the state to Reagan by two points in 1980, Obama to Mitt Romney by three points in 2012, and Bill Clinton to George H.W. Bush by only seven-tenths of a point in 1992. The remaining Democratic losses were by more substantial margins; in his 1996 re-election campaign, Clinton's margin in North Carolina slipped below his previous total even as he solidly defeated Republican Bob Dole nationally. In 1984, 1988 and 2000, Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis and Al Gore lost the state by 24, 16 and 13 points, respectively; even the Vice Presidential candidacy of North

[12] *Shaw v. Reno* (509 U.S. 630 [1993]); *Hunt v. Cromartie* (526 U.S. 541 [1999]).

Carolina Senator John Edwards could not bring John Kerry closer than 12 points from victory in 2004. (Lamis 1990; Barone and Ujifusa 1993; *Politics in America*, various editions)

In North Carolina, Republican presidential candidates had an advantage in non-precinct voting which shifted to the Democrats during the time examined by this study. In 1996 (in those areas for which data are available) and 2000, Bob Dole and George W. Bush defeated Bill Clinton and Al Gore, respectively, by a larger margin among absentee voters than among Election Day voters, but in 2004, Bush defeated John F. Kerry by a larger margin among Election Day voters than among absentees (North Carolina State Board of Elections data; Bonner, Bauerlein and Raynor 2004). The 2008 data show not only a Democratic advantage, but the emergence of a significant difference in Democratic and Republican preferences of voting methods. As will be discussed below, Obama won the One Stop vote in both elections, while McCain and Romney, respectively, won the Election Day vote. McCain's voters were slightly more likely to vote on Election Day than One Stop, while more of Obama's 2008 voters used One Stop than voted on Election Day, and in 2012, almost twice as many Obama supporters voted One Stop as voted on Election Day. Romney's Election Day total declined from McCain's, but his One Stop total surpassed McCain's by a larger margin. (North Carolina State Board of Elections data)

## Election Administration in North Carolina

The governing body of elections in North Carolina is the State Board of Elections, an independent agency headed by a five-member body whose members are appointed by the Governor for four-year terms. In practice, three members of the Board are members

of the Governor's party and the remaining two are members of the other major party (North Carolina General Statutes 163-19 and 163-28). The Executive Director of the State Board of Elections is appointed by the board, and is the chief state elections official (North Carolina General Statutes 163-26, 163-27, 163-27.1). Each county has a board of elections, appointed by the state board, consisting of three members, no more than two of whom may be members of the same party; in practice, each county board consists of two members of the Governor's party and one member of the other major party. North Carolina's Governors were Democrats at the time of all five elections examined within this work, and thus there is no observable variance in party control of these boards.[13] The county director of elections is appointed by the Executive Director of the State Board, upon the recommendation of the county board. The county director may not be an elected official, candidate for office, political party officer, or campaign officer for a candidate (North Carolina General Statutes 163-30, 163-35). Funding for the county board of elections in the responsibility of the Board of County Commissioners, which is an independently elected partisan body in each county (North Carolina General Statutes 163-37).

Under the original 1999 legislation permitting no-excuse early voting and the establishment of satellite sites, a county board had to agree unanimously on the location of a particular site. Shortly before the 2000 election, this was changed to provide that, in the event that a county board could not unanimously agree on a siting plan, the state board could determine the county's plan by majority vote. This was subsequently the subject of partisan dispute, for example, with respect to the planned establishment of

[13] James B. Hunt, Jr. (1996 and 2000); Michael F. Easley (2004 and 2008); and Beverly Eaves Perdue (2012).

satellite voting sites on the campuses of historically black Winston-Salem State University, in Forsyth County, and North Carolina Central University, in Durham County (Rawlins and Bonner 2000; Christensen 2000). As the number of satellite sites has increased in subsequent elections, however, it appears that early voting has been convenient enough to both Democratic and Republican voters that the location of these sites is no longer a matter of frequent political controversy.

Having outlined the history of North Carolina politics, the enactment of the reforms being examined, and the methods by which elections are administered in the state, the present research now turns to a discussion of the argument which it will pursue. (The specific research hypotheses to be tested are stated in Chapter Three.) The present work will argue that the observed increase in North Carolina's voter turnout, controlling for the state's substantial population growth, can be primarily attributed to the election reforms examined herein. These reforms have increased voter participation in a way which has had the effect of benefiting the Democratic Party more than the Republican Party, in particular contributing to the victory of Barack Obama in the state in 2008. The examination of the partisan effects of these reforms will build on the work of Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978); Calvert and Gilchrist (1993); Brians and Grofman (1999); Knack (1999 and 2001); Highton and Wolfinger (2001); Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn (2007); and de Oliviera (2009).

The second major issue to be explored herein is whether Boards of County Commissioners which are controlled by Democrats, as opposed to Republicans, will devote a greater share of resources to the implementation of election reform, the most expensive component of which is the operation of One Stop voting sites. If this is the

case, party control of the commission should be a statistically significant variable in regression equations examining each of the following, which are various ways in which "turnout" and "political effects" will be operationalized in the context of the present research:

1. The percentage of the vote which is cast nonprecinct;
2. The percentage of voting age population who are registered;
3. Turnout of registered voters;
4. Turnout of voting age population;
5. The percentage of registered members of each party who are same day registrants (in 2008 and 2012);
6. The percentage of each candidate's vote which is cast nonprecinct;
7. The Democratic presidential candidate's percentage of the vote in the county.

In each case, greater registration, same day registration, turnout, nonprecinct voting, and Democratic vote share, would be expected in Democratic-controlled counties, due to a greater share of resources being expended in these areas. The effects, and specifically the partisan effects, of each of these reforms have been the subject of extensive research, much of which will be discussed later in this work, as has the issue of partisan differences in election administration and the implementation of reform (Hasen 2005). The work also explore whether Democratic-controlled counties have a lower ratio of registered voters to One Stop sites. The fewer voters per site, the greater the relative commitment to One Stop voting, and the greater reduction in the Downsian "costs" for potential voters, which should hypothetically contribute to greater voter turnout.

The greater relative benefit to the Democratic Party from these reforms is hypothesized to arise from the fact that those potential voters for whom the Downsian "costs" of voting are greatest are, demographically, more likely to be Democrats than Republicans: persons of lower education, lower income, and disproportionately members of racial minority groups. The model will incorporate variables to represent each of these characteristics.

The null hypothesis is that there is no difference in the observed effects between Democratic- and Republican-controlled counties. The counterargument is that, although Republicans initially opposed the enactment of these reforms, in particular One Stop voting, once it was in place, Republican elected bodies would make an equal effort to make it easier for their own voters to vote, since increasing turnout in Republican areas can be expected to benefit Republican candidates in state and federal races, even if it has no effect on the outcome of local elections.

The next chapter of the present research will examine the theories of political participation and election administration, with a review of the relevant work of previous authors on these subjects. The third chapter will present the research design and a detailed description of the data examined, and the methods being used. Subsequent chapters will test the various hypotheses previously described, using several different dependent variables to measure participation and partisan effects, and how they may vary according to implementation. The concluding analysis will explore any observed effects, whether these effects are primarily the result of election reform itself, differential implementation of reform on the county level, or can primarily be explained by the socioeconomic factors which have traditionally been used to explain differences in

political participation. It is hoped that this work will contribute to a greater understanding of the interaction of election rules and voter participation in the United States.

# CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

"Early voting is a crock." – Dr. Ted Arrington.[14]

This work will draw from a variety of theoretical literature and existing work on political participation and election administration. Voting, early voting, voter registration, absentee voting, same day registration, election administration, public attitudes toward participation, and the interaction of these factors, have all been the subject of extensive historical and contemporary research, upon which the present project seeks to build. A review of the relevant theories and literature in these various topics follows.

This study is limited in its scope by focusing entirely on voting as an expression of political participation. As Leighley (1995:196) points out, political participation takes many forms other than voting (among them, protests and interest group activity), and

> …an overwhelming focus on voter turnout to the exclusion of other forms of participation has restricted studies of the consequences of participation to looking only at turnout. And the lack of appropriate data on participation other than voting makes it nearly impossible to assess the consequences of the types of participation that are probably most likely to have a direct influence on government officials.

Despite this limited focus, a study of voting procedures and their effects raises important issues because, alone among the many forms of participation, voting is the "official" method by which citizens express their preferences and decisions, and the method whose results are legally binding on the selection of officeholders and the policies which result from those choices.

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[14] Then-Chair, Department of Political Science, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, as quoted in *The Charlotte Observer*, Oct. 14, 2000.

Another caveat which must be mentioned is the historic nature of the 2008 election, with Barack Obama as the first African-American nominee of a major party, and subsequently the first black president. Gronke, Hicks and Toffey (2009) explicitly argue that this election is an aberration for that reason, particularly with regard to African-American early voting in the South, which was aided by the Obama campaign's highly sophisticated mobilization effort. Certainly 2008 represents the confluence of unique circumstances: The race featured a candidate with historic appeal to a group which has historically been disenfranchised and, even after the legal barriers to voting were lifted, has participated at lower levels than the white majority[15]. That candidate's campaign targeted North Carolina and launched a mobilization effort in the state far more extensive than those of recent previous Democratic presidential candidates. At the same time, North Carolina introduced same day registration, and most counties substantially increased their number of early voting sites from the previous election. Isolating the individual effects of these factors poses a challenge for the researcher. However, the combination of Obama's win in North Carolina in 2008 and loss in 2012 presents the opportunity to examine the extent to which the former election truly was aberrational.

A comparison of the two elections will provide evidence as to the role played by election reform in each case, and the long-term vs. short-term effects of each. Were some reforms effective only under the circumstances of Obama's historic first campaign, while others have changed voter participation and behavior in a long-term manner? Are some types of reforms implemented more or less effectively depending on the circumstances of

[15] Verba and Nie (1972) and Tate (1991) find that, when socioeconomic status is controlled for, African-Americans actually participate at a higher level than do whites. Thus, the disparity mentioned above must be attributed to socioeconomic factors.

the specific election? For example, did a county's decision to increase its number of One Stop sites in 2008 produce greatly increased turnout only because of the Obama candidacy, an increase which might not have occurred under different political circumstances? And were the differing outcomes of the two elections in North Carolina somehow attributable to differences in their administration? As will be discussed below, while the use of early voting in North Carolina has continued to grow (among all groups of voters, regardless of race or party), some counties used fewer One Stop sites in 2012 than in 2008. Did this reduction have an effect on the outcome? The present work will consider these possibilities.

## Theories of Political Participation (and Nonparticipation)

As mentioned in the opening chapter of this work, much of the theory of political participation is derived from Downs' (1957) conception of a voter's calculation of the "costs and benefits" of voting. Structural barriers affect those costs, while positive attitudinal changes affect the perceived benefits. These two factors have been the primary foci of the institutional and behavioral theories of participation. The institutional theory argues that nonvoting is due primarily to structural barriers, and thus can be addressed by election reforms (such as those discussed in the present work), while behavioralists argue that nonparticipation is produced by an individual's attitudinal orientation toward the political system, a remedy for which is beyond the political system's structural ability to provide. Piven and Cloward (2000) characterize this debate as taking place between the "legal-institutional" theory and the "political-behavioral" theory, and take their position in favor of the former, arguing that the institution of requirements such as voter registration was a deliberate attempt to suppress electoral participation, particularly

among newly-arrived immigrants and urban voters who historically provided the core of the Democratic coalition in much of the country. Thus, removing such procedural barriers should increase turnout. This will be the theoretical basis of the proposed work.

The present work will argue that the more complicated the process of voting, the less likely some individuals will be to participate in it. Therefore, easing or removing these barriers – such as North Carolina's reforms allowing registration and voting in a single step, expanding the time available for casting one's vote, and removing the restrictions on being able to vote away from one's polling place on a designated Election Day – should increase turnout. Clearly, turnout has increased in North Carolina as these reforms have been instituted, and the present work will argue that a causal relationship can be established. However, implementation of these reforms has not been uniform throughout the state. For example, the state law requiring that all counties allow One Stop voting ahead of Election Day leaves it to county discretion whether to use multiple satellite voting sites (and if so, how many), or offer early voting only at the Board of Elections office or another single location. The decisions which counties have made in this regard do not appear to be strictly a function of their population or number of registered voters; some small counties have chosen to use multiple sites, while some larger counties use only one. (The dates and hours during which One Stop voting is available also vary by county and by individual location; however, those details are beyond the scope of the present study.)

While state law and the State Board of Elections provide general guidelines, North Carolina elections are administered in each county according to a budget set by the county commission. As one county's Board of Elections describes it, elections are

"county funded and state governed" (Pamlico County 2013). The resources made available for the conduct of the election determine, among other things, the availability of early voting sites. Thus, counties have had to make different administrative decisions about election reform within their individual budget constraints. Have these different administrative decisions produced differential effects on participation?

It is also important to examine, as the work will, whether these reforms have had differential effects among different groups of voters – and why. It appears, for example, that in North Carolina, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to use "new" methods of participation such as same day registration and early voting, while Republicans are more likely to use traditional methods such as Election Day voting (which requires advance registration) and absentee voting by mail. While the introduction of same day registration coincided with the first Obama election (and victory) in North Carolina, an examination of county- and state-provided election returns reveals that the relative Democratic advantage in early voting has consistently existed since the practice was made universally available in 2000. In order to explain the partisan effects of these reforms, it is necessary to explore and explain why there appears to be a correlation between one's choice of candidate and one's choice of voting method. And does this mean that administrative decisions related to the implementation of reform – for example, whether and how much to increase the opportunity for early voting – will have greater or lesser effects on different populations of voters or potential voters?

The behavioralist perspective is represented by the work of Berinsky (2005) and Fitzgerald (2005). Berinsky (2005) argues that institutional change is insufficient to produce "the engagement of the broader mass public with the political world," (p. 473),

the deficiency of which is the true cause of nonparticipation. He further argues that reforms such as those being examined by the present work have the effect of further stratifying the electorate and making the voting public even less representative of the population as a whole. His reasoning is that these reforms make it easier to participate for those who are already engaged and interested in political matters without increasing engagement or interest among those who are not – in his terms, "retention" rather than "stimulation." (p. 477) Voter engagement, therefore, requires change which is attitudinal, not structural, in nature.

Fitzgerald (2005) argues that "voter turnout in U.S. elections may be less about convenience and costs than expected." (p. 842) She argues that the implementation of early voting may actually be counterproductive to increasing turnout, because mobilization efforts by parties and campaigns may be less effective if they are diffused over a period of days or weeks rather than concentrated on a single election day, while the implementation of EDR/SDR does tend to increase turnout. Her study finds that early voting tends to increase participation among those populations where high levels of it already exist, and that both of these reforms have tended to be enacted in states which have historically already had high levels of turnout. This would indicate that the availability of early voting increases convenience for those who are already inclined to vote, but does not adequately reduce costs for nonvoters to the point that they are able or willing to participate. She argues that "the more significant costs surrounding electoral participation are those related to political knowledge, interest, and involvement" (p. 857) rather than those involved in the procedural aspects of registering to vote and then casting a ballot.

Verba and Nie (1972) argue that both institutional and attitudinal factors play a role in an individual's political participation, in particular that institutions shape attitudes, which determine participatory "outputs." Brady, Verba and Schlozman (1995) develop a "resource model" of political participation, which includes elements of both institutional and behavioral theories. These authors argue that resources – primarily time, money, and civic skills – are necessary to participation, and that differential access to these resources results in differing levels of participation based on socioeconomic status. This model borrows from both institutional and behavior theories in that the resource of time can be addressed by structural reforms expanding the time available for voting (such as early voting) or reducing the time required for it (same-day registration or no-excuse absentee voting by mail), while the development of civic skills is addressed by behavior or attitudinal change.

The conclusion to be drawn from this argument is that structural reform is both necessary and sufficient to facilitate participation by existing but infrequent voters, i.e., those who may have registered but do not vote regularly, while it is necessary but not sufficient to stimulate turnout among the demobilized, those who have declined to participate rather than simply found it impossible to do so. For these voters, whose abstention lends itself to a behaviorally-based explanation, additional intervention is required, primarily contact and mobilization by a party, candidate or campaign (Niven 2002 and 2004; Masket 2009). This indicates that the types of election reform being examined herein may provide a partial solution, but only that, to the problem of voter nonparticipation, and that reform may have differential effects on those whose nonparticipation is caused by different factors. These reforms can be expected to affect

the behavior of those whose nonparticipation is caused by structural factors, but not those who abstain due to their behavioral attitudes.

## Election Administration

The partisan nature of election administration in state and local jurisdictions has been the subject of significant research, especially in the event of well-publicized incidents in which partisan officials were seen as administering election matters in a manner which advantaged their chosen candidate or party, such as Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris and Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell allegedly acting on behalf of the George W. Bush campaigns in 2000 and 2004, respectively, and allegations that California Secretary of State Kevin Shelley used HAVA funds for the benefit of the state Democratic Party (Hasen 2005; Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn 2006; Kimball and Kropf 2006).

While Kimball and Kropf (2006) find that many jurisdictions entrust the administration of elections to a local official chosen in a partisan election, the partisanship of election administration in North Carolina is indirect. While the State Board of Elections and the County Boards which it appoints are controlled by members of the governor's political party, these authorities hire, at both the state and local levels, professional election administrators (the "street-level bureaucrats" in this case) who are legally insulated from partisan politics, as stated in the present Chapter One. Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn (2006) find that a large majority of citizens surveyed preferred that their local elections be overseen by an elected, nonpartisan board (as opposed to appointed, partisan, or a single individual). It would seem that the structure of election governance in North Carolina partially complies with public opinion as examined by

these authors; at both the state and county level, an appointed board, whose membership favors the party which won the previous gubernatorial election, in turn appoints and oversees an individual, nonpartisan administrator.

Kimball, Kropf and Battles (2006) note that "very little research has examined the effect of election officials on voter turnout." (p. 450) Kimball and Kropf (2006) argue that the development of a greater understanding of the behavior of local election officials requires further research involving measurable topics, including absentee and early voting. This aspect of election administration and implementation has not been the focus of significant previous research. The present work will seek to make a contribution in this area. This work argues that the greatest potential for partisan influence on election administration in North Carolina, and thus the matter of greatest interest to the present study, lies in the control of the county elections budget by Boards of County Commissioners. These Commissioners are separately chosen in partisan elections; the effect of these actors on turnout will be a focus on the present work. The budget-driven amount of resources made available for the conduct of an election affects factors such as the extent to which the county is able to make early voting available. To put this in perspective, in 2012, the operation of each early voting site in Edgecombe County cost $10,000 (*Rocky Mount Telegram* 2012). Kimball and Kropf (2006) argue that "[f]unding may be more important than partisanship for proper administration of elections..." (p. 11).

On occasion, county funds may be supplemented with federal or state funds for particular purposes. For example, the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 provided grants to states for projects including upgrading voting technology in response to the well-publicized difficulties encountered in the 2000 election in Florida. However, in

2012, over the objections of elections officials in more than 85 counties (Frank 2012), the North Carolina General Assembly declined to appropriate $644,000 in state matching funds which would have been necessary to receive an additional $4 million in federal HAVA funding. Counties had to increase their own funding in order to maintain the same level of services; for example, Johnston County had to do so by $40,000 to preserve its desired level of staffing and number of voting sites (Baird 2012).

Another issue with respect to election administration is the "principal-agent problem" involved in the conduct of a large-scale election on a single day, where a great deal of authority is invested in largely autonomous but perhaps inadequately trained poll workers. Alvarez and Hall (2006) advocate alternatives to traditional Election Day polling place voting, such as early voting and voting by mail, as potential solutions to this issue. These authors argue that a universal vote-by-mail system, such as that used in Oregon, would both increase turnout and improve the accuracy of the vote count. Early voting, and voting at centralized centers rather than decentralized precinct-level polling places, also alleviates the "principal-agent" problem by requiring fewer poll workers (allowing for the selection of those who are more experienced and thus presumably less error-prone), and minimizing the probability of mistakes which result from a large number of voters attempting to participate at one time. These authors, however, caution that consolidation of polling places may reduce overall turnout and increase absentee voting.

## Election Administrators and Election Reform

Changing the manner in which elections are conducted changes the job and responsibilities of those who conduct it. Offering a new method or type of voting means

that procedures must be developed for its administration, and the new policy must actually be implemented. It is necessary to consider the extent to which officials' perceptions and judgments of these reforms affect their administration of them. Following HAVA's requirement that provisional ballots be made available for certain (potential) voters, Kimball, Kropf and Battles (2006) find partisan differences between Democratic and Republican election officials in their allowance or disallowance of those ballots, with each party's officials more likely to approve provisional votes cast in a jurisdiction more favorable to that party and less likely to do so in an area where voters are more likely to support the opposite party. Kropf, Vercellotti and Kimball (2013) reach a similar conclusion. Provisional voters, however, represent a relatively small share of the electorate; these findings cannot be generalized to the admissibility of ballots cast by those whose residence and registration are not in question. Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan (2011) find that local election officials in Wisconsin generally support Election Day Registration as a means of increasing turnout, but that they opposed the idea of early voting both because it poses an administrative burden (added time and expense) and because it detracts from the civic ritual of collectively voting on a single Election Day. Wisconsin, however, is a unique case because of the highly localized nature of its election system – the authors report that almost 20% of the local election officials in the United States are in Wisconsin – so these findings cannot be generalized to states, counties or other jurisdictions where the election authorities can be assumed to serve a constituency which may be considerably larger in population.

The authors cited immediately above examine election administration from the point of view of the local official, while the present work seeks to explore how the

availability of voting options affects electoral turnout. Election administration may affect public confidence in the electoral system, and thus may also affect participation. Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn (2008) argue that voters who exhibit greater levels of trust that their ballots will be accurately counted are more likely to vote.

## Characteristics of Voters and Nonvoters

In comparison to the general population, voters are older, more likely to be married, better educated, wealthier and more likely to be white; perceptions that the process of registration is difficult, and problems with registration affecting one's ability to vote, are more frequently reported by members of racial minority groups (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978; Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn 2007; Alvarez and Hall 2009). The question thus presents itself whether election reform would therefore be of greater proportional benefit to those who are underrepresented in the voting population: younger, single, less well educated, poorer and minority citizens. Would election reforms such as early voting, liberalized absentee voting by mail, and election day registration, among others, make the voting electorate more demographically representative of the population as a whole, and if so, what would be the political and partisan effects of this change? This work will now review existing research on the demographic, partisan and turnout effects of the reforms being examined herein.

## Election Reform: Same Day Registration and Convenience Voting

"Convenience voting" is defined as any method of voting other than the traditional practice of casting a ballot at one's home precinct on a designated election day (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey 2008). Convenience voting may take the form of casting an absentee ballot by mail, voting ahead of the designated election

day at an elections office, or voting at a satellite center during some period of time ahead of the election day, generally known as “in-person early voting.”

In-person early voting: Rosenfield (1994) differentiates in-person early voting from absentee voting, either in person or by mail, on the basis of six characteristics as follows:

> Eligibility: Any registered voter may cast an in-person early vote, while most states require a voter to state a reason before being allowed to vote absentee;
> Application: Early voters do not have to complete an application before voting in this manner, whereas traditional absentee voters must do so;
> Identifiability of ballot: Ballots cast in early voting are not individually identifiable, whereas traditional absentee ballots (whether cast in person or by mail) can be traced to the individual voter;
> Hours of availability: Traditional in-person absentee balloting takes place only during the office hours of local election officials, whereas early voting takes place during extended hours (more hours during the day, and on weekends or other days when the central elections office may be closed);
> Location: Traditional in-person absentee balloting takes place only at the offices of local election officials, whereas early votes may be cast at a number of satellite sites throughout the electoral jurisdiction;
> Publicity: Early voting, as defined here, is accompanied by publicity to inform voters of its availability, time and locations. (paraphrased from Rosenfield 1994, pp. 1-2)

Thus, the form of early voting examined herein is available to any registered voter in the jurisdiction, without excuse or application, may occur at any one of a number of sites, occurs during a time not limited to the office hours of the election authorities, involves a ballot which cannot be traced to an individual voter after being cast, and is publicized by the local authorities. Early voting takes place within a specified time period, opening in different states from four to 45 days before the scheduled Election Day

and generally closing within a week before it. The average early voting period is 19 days (National Conference of State Legislatures 2013). In North Carolina, until 2013, early voting (known as "one stop absentee voting") began on the third Thursday before Election Day and ends on the Saturday before it, for a total period of 17 days (North Carolina State Board of Elections, "One-stop Absentee Voting"). Legislation enacted in 2013 removed the first week from the early voting period, reducing the time available to nine days (North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2013-381).

Same Day Registration: Research has consistently indicated that a registration cutoff date in advance of the election is one of the most significant impediments to voting (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978), and particularly for those who move shortly before Election Day (Squire, Wolfinger and Glass 1987; Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan 2009). Combining the process of registration and voting into a single step reduces the "costs" of participation and allows newcomers to join the process at a time close to Election Day when interest in the ongoing campaign is highest (McDonald 2008a)[16], and thus proponents of increased participation see Election Day registration (EDR) and same day registration (SDR) as means to accomplish this goal. In North Carolina, this is known as "One Stop registration"; it was abolished in 2013 by the same legislation which reduced the early voting period by one week (North Carolina General Assembly Session Law 2013-381).

[16] It should be noted, however, that McDonald (2008a) observes that this does not necessarily increase turnout among people who have recently moved and are required to change their voter registration as a result.

Rather than requiring citizens who wish to vote to register in advance (often as much as 30 days before an election), eleven U.S. states[17] and the District of Columbia have enacted legislation allowing prospective voters to register and vote in a single step on, or soon before, Election Day. Of particular interest are the effects of this practice on overall electoral participation in the form of voter turnout, and on the demographic and partisan representativeness of the participating electorate. Does making voter registration easier then make it easier to vote or more likely than one will vote? And does this election reform disproportionately affect members of groups who are traditionally less likely to participate? A significant amount of literature has examined the history of this practice and its effects on voter turnout.

Between 1973 and 1976, the states of Maine, Minnesota and Wisconsin each adopted the practice of allowing previously unregistered eligible voters to register at the polls on Election Day, and then immediately vote. (Brians and Grofman 2001) Idaho, New Hampshire and Wyoming adopted the practice following passage of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA), under a provision which allowed states with EDR an exemption from its requirement that voter registration materials be made available at a variety of public facilities including motor vehicle and public assistance agency offices (Alvarez, Ansolabehere and Wilson 2002). Montana adopted EDR at central county elections offices, but not at precinct polling places, in 2006. (Dēmos 2007) In 2007, North Carolina enacted legislation allowing registration during the state's One

[17] California, Connecticut, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Wisconsin and Wyoming all allow Election Day registration. As mentioned elsewhere in the present work, North Carolina was the first state to allow same day registration during the early voting period but not on Election Day itself. It was later joined by Ohio. North Carolina repealed SDR in 2013. (National Conference of State Legislatures 2013a; North Carolina Session Law 2013-381).

Stop early voting period but not on Election Day itself (i.e., SDR but not EDR) (Comstock-Gay 2007). Iowa adopted SDR in 2008 (Dēmos 2013).

Absentee Voting by Mail: In the United States, the first widespread use of voting away from one's home polling place occurred during the Civil War, when soldiers fighting away from home (on both sides of the conflict) were given the opportunity to mail ballots to their home states in the 1864 presidential election. While most states adopted laws providing for absentee voting by civilians in the early 20th Century, its most significant expansion in that era came as an attempt to facilitate voting by military personnel serving overseas during World War II. Civilian absentee voting expanded thereafter, although those who wished to exercise this option were required to provide a reason (such as illness for absence from the area) why they were unable to vote on Election Day. In 1973, California became the first state to allow any registered voter to vote absentee without conditions (Fortier 2004). By 1998, Oregon had expanded the use of absentee voting to the point that it eliminated its physical polling places and began to conduct its elections entirely by mail, with ballots automatically sent to each registered voter (Fortier 2004; Berinsky, Burns and Traugott 2001). As of 2013, absentee voting without an excuse is permitted in 27 states and the District of Columbia (National Conference of State Legislatures 2013).[18]

This work will now review a selection of the literature pertaining to the participation and partisan effects of each of these reforms. Of interest are the

[18] Both early voting and no-excuse absentee voting are offered in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah, Vermont, Wisconsin and Wyoming. The states which offer early voting but require an excuse for absentee voting by mail are Arkansas, Indiana, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia. New Jersey is the only state with no-excuse absentee voting by mail, but not early voting. The states not mentioned here have adopted neither reform. (National Conference of State Legislatures 2013)

demographic change which is produced in the electorate by increased availability of registration and voting; the effect on voter turnout; and the degree to which these newly-involved voters' participation produces changes in the outcome of elections.

## Demographic Effects of Election Reform

Much of the research in this area has examined the extent to which early voters differ politically, attitudinally and demographically from those who vote on the traditional Election Day. This issue addresses the question of whether making early voting available increases turnout among those who could not, or would not choose to, vote otherwise, or whether it simply makes the process of voting more convenient for established voters. If it is the latter, then early voting has not succeeded in its intended purpose of increasing participation. Previous research has explored this topic at both the individual and the aggregate levels.

A strategy paper authored by Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) for a conference on the mobilization of progressive voters cites arguments by proponents of early voting that those voters who are most likely to benefit from it include people with multiple demands on their time, persons with disabilities, those who live a long distance from their precinct polling place, and non-English speakers or others who need the assistance of a polling worker during the process of voting. Neeley and Richardson (2001) quote the Majority Leader of the Tennessee Senate at the time that early voting was adopted there to the effect that it was expected to increase opportunities for participation by military personnel stationed elsewhere, students attending college away from home, workers whose schedules did not make it possible for them to vote on Election Day, persons with disabilities, and those with transportation difficulties. In

North Carolina, the debate appears to have taken on a more partisan tone, with both Democrats and Republicans appearing to believe that Democratic constituencies would disproportionately be the beneficiaries of greater opportunities to vote (Sandford 2000; Christensen 2000; Wayne and Becker 2000).

Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) cite research indicating that the distance of one's home from the assigned precinct polling place is negatively correlated with probability of voting; the availability of early voting at a satellite site closer to home presumably increases that probability. Dyck and Gimpel (2009) find that distance to the polling place is positively correlated with a voter's probability of using convenience voting, although Gimpel, Dyck and Shaw (2006) find mixed results for this relationship, arguing that convenience voting is most likely to be used by voters with both higher levels of education and a longer commute time to work. This interaction produces a greater probability of both an interest in politics and time pressures which might make traditional Election Day voting less convenient. Gronke (2004) also finds that voters with longer commutes are more likely to use early voting.

Berinsky (2005) examines the work of other authors to argue that the increased availability of convenience voting (whether One Stop or mail absentee) retains existing voters but does not stimulate voting by previous nonvoters. This tendency exacerbates the existing socioeconomic bias in the electorate (in which the poor, less well educated, and members of minority groups are not represented in proportion to their share of the population) because it makes existing voters more likely to vote without increasing the probability that nonvoters will participate. He argues that those who are more likely to vote because of convenience voting are predominantly white and older, better educated,

wealthier and more politically active than the electorate as a whole. The work of several authors explores the possibility that the 2008 election departed from this trend because the Obama campaign's mobilization efforts increased early voting among African-Americans and Democrats (Gronke, Hicks and Toffey 2009; Kropf 2012).

A consideration of the demographic differences between early voters and Election Day voters must include the issues of race and ethnicity. Presumably due to the presence on the 2008 ballot of Barack Obama as the first African-American presidential nominee of a major party, black North Carolinians comprised a disproportionate share of new registrants, and the percentage of black turnout exceeded that for white voters for the first time (Morrill and Mellnik 2008; "Under the Dome" 2008). Some previous research has indicated that African-Americans have been less likely than members of other ethnic groups to utilize early voting; while Stein's (1998) analysis finds no significant racial or ethnic differences in its use, Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005), Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) and Haag (2010) all find that early voters are generally more likely than Election Day voters to be white (or Hispanic) than African-American. Kenski (2005) reaches the same conclusion with respect to the 2004 election, but finds no difference among the groups in 2000. Haag's (2010) study of Texas elections from 2002 to 2008 finds that Hispanic voters were more likely to vote on Election Day, while Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) find that Cuban-Americans in Miami-Dade County, Florida, in 2004 were more likely to early vote while black voters were less likely to do so. The rate of early voting by African-Americans increased substantially in 2008, presumably because of the Obama candidacy. Gronke, Hicks and Toffey (2009) observe this in particular among Southern black voters, while

Haag (2010) reaches the same conclusion about black voters in Texas. The present research has access to same day registration data for voters by race, but does not include data on actual voting by race beyond the fact that SDR, by definition, includes early voting.

Gronke and Toffey (2008) argue that the expansion of convenience (non-precinct) voting opportunities primarily benefits higher income, better educated, older votes who are more attuned to politics and campaigns, but the relative differences between early voters and Election Day voters vary according to the type of election being held, with greater disparities observed in presidential election years. Their comparison of participation trends in presidential elections (2004 and 2008) and midterm elections (2002 and 2006) indicates inconsistent and even contradictory results between the two; for example, a voter's level of education and extent of paying attention to the campaign is positively correlated with early voting in midterm election years but negatively correlated with it in presidential election years, while the relationship between income and early voting shows the opposite trend. The present study, however, focuses only on presidential elections without consideration of differences in voting patterns in midterm elections.

Larocca and Klemanski (2011) quantify the "costs" of voting primarily in terms of the number of trips and the number of tasks involved in completing the process. They find a consistent positive effect on turnout resulting from liberalized absentee voting requirements and Election Day registration, and a consistent negative effect resulting from early voting. They attribute the latter effect to the decreased effectiveness of mobilization efforts spread across several days or weeks, rather than focused on a single Election Day; they argue that this diffused mobilization is less effective at lowering the

"costs" of obtaining the information necessary for many nonvoters to make their decisions to vote, and for whom. Furthermore, while early voting increases the window of opportunity available for voting, it decreases neither the number of trips nor the number of tasks involved; indeed, these authors argue that it may increase the "cost" if the early voting site is farther from the voter's home than the assigned precinct polling place.

Rigby and Springer (2010) argue that reforms of the voting process, rather than of the registration process, exacerbate existing inequality in political participation, particularly in states where such bias already exists to a significant degree. They argue that nonvoting is more likely to be the result of inaccessibility of registration rather than of voting itself, and thus that attempts to increase participation should focus on the first stage of the two-step process rather than the second. They further argue that EDR, which consolidates the process of registering and voting into a single step, reduce inequality to a greater degree than reforms such as "Motor Voter," which widened the opportunity for registration and thus reduced the cost of that step of the process, but maintained voting as a separate step and did not reduce that cost. Fitzgerald (2005) also argues that registration reform, in particular the adoption of EDR, rather than the adoption of convenience voting, will have a greater impact on the number of nonvoters who are able to become active as voters.

Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) and Haag (2010) each find that first-time voters are less likely to early vote and more likely to vote on Election Day. Stein (1998) finds that newly registered voters are less likely to vote at all, even given the opportunity to early vote. Greenberg and Carville (2009) find that the

individual practice of early voting appears to be "fluid" from one election to the next; approximately half of early voters in 2008 were first-time early voters, while the other half had early voted in either 2004 or 2006.

A comparison of early voters and Election Day voters on the characteristic of economic class produces inconclusive results. Stein and Garcia-Monet (1997) find that early voters are wealthier than Election Day voters, as judged by their county's median home value. However, Stein's (1998) study of the 1994 election in Texas finds that early voters had slightly lower incomes than Election Day voters. Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) find that early voters are not higher income than their Election Day counterparts. In contrast, Gronke, Hicks and Toffey (2009) find that higher income voters were more likely than the average voter to use in-person early voting in 2008, but they were not more likely to vote absentee. Gronke and Toffey (2008) assert that the income difference between the two groups of voters has been increasing over time, as early voting options have expanded; these authors find no significant difference in income between early voters and Election Day voters in 2000 and 2002, but that early voters had higher incomes in 2004 and 2006.

The demographic characteristic of an individual's level of education is another area in which most research has found differences between early voters and Election Day voters. This is a consistent finding in Gronke's work with various co-authors. Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) find that early voters are better educated than the average voter. Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) find that early voters are more likely to be better informed and better educated, and Gronke, Hicks and Toffey (2009) find that better-educated voters were more likely to early vote, either

absentee or in-person in 2008. Gronke and Toffey (2008) find no difference in educational levels between early and Election Day voters in 2000 and 2002, but that early voters were better educated in 2004 and 2006 (another example of these authors' assertion, presented above, that differences between the two groups of voters have increased over time as early voting options have expanded). Gronke and Toffey (2008) specifically discover that one's level of education has a strong positive effect on the probability of one's early voting in states whose laws make early voting more readily available. Stein (1998) reports finding no difference in educational levels between the two groups, but that early voters were significantly more likely to report an interest in politics, while Barreto, Streb, Marks and Guerra (2006) report that absentee voters in California are better educated than their Election Day counterparts, though they do not significantly differ in their political views.

## Turnout Effects of Election Reform

Each procedural reform will be examined individually for its impact on turnout in the relevant elections. How many voters have chosen to take advantage of each? Which political or demographic groups have been most affected by these reforms, in terms of their participation? And have these effects differed according to the partisan control of the county commission in each jurisdiction? Several authors (Oliver 1996; Hansen 2001; Johansen 2006; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum and Miller 2007) argue that election reform increases turnout only in conjunction with campaign or party mobilization. This study will explore the issue from a different perspective, that of the partisan effect of election administration. This could be considered an examination of the "internal" election

process, how registration and voting are carried out by the official authorities, rather than of "external" factors such as campaign and party mobilization.

Turnout Effects of Same Day Registration: The study will explore the extent to which North Carolina's implementation of same day registration (SDR) contributed to its unparalleled growth in voter turnout in 2008. The availability of voter registration statistics for each county on Election Day 2008 and 2012, and 25 days previous to each election (the cutoff date for standard registration), allow for the construction of a variable representing net change in registration within the same day registration/early voting period. This net change includes new same day registrants and subtracts those who were dropped or purged from the rolls within the last month before the election. Presumably, any observed net gain is attributable to same day registrants.

Several authors have examined the effects of EDR and SDR on turnout in different elections over time. Calvert and Gilchrist (1993) find that in Minnesota from 1971 to 1993, 19.4% of voters in presidential elections were Election Day registrants; in 2006, an estimated 13% of the vote was cast by these voters (Dēmos 2007). Research over decades has consistently found a negative relationship between registration closing date and turnout (e.g., Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978; Rhine 1995).

Recent research generally finds a positive relationship between the implementation of EDR/SDR and turnout, with an average increase of 3.6 points following its adoption (Knack 1999), six points in the midterm elections from 1990 to 1994 and three points in the presidential elections from 1992 to 1996 (Knack and White 2000; Knack 2001). McDonald (2008a) finds a seven-point increase in turnout in 2004 due to EDR; three-quarters of this increase is accounted for by new registrants, and the

remainder by existing voters who move close to Election Day. Rhine (1995) predicts that the adoption of universal SDR would increase turnout by 14 points, while Alvarez, Ansolabehere and Wilson (2002) argue that the existence of universal SDR in the 2000 election would have increased registration by 5.7 points and actual turnout by 8.1 points.

In comparison to states which have not adopted these practices, turnout has been shown to be higher in EDR/SDR states by margins of 10 points in 1980 and 1992 (Highton 1997), 12 points in the presidential elections from 1976 to 1988 (Knack 1995), 15.1 points in 2000 (Alvarez, Ansolabehere and Wilson 2002), and10.5 points in 2006 (Lierman 2008). It also appears that EDR/SDR can sustain higher levels of turnout even in the event of national turnout declines.

Fenster (1994) finds that the original EDR states increased their presidential election turnout from 1972 to 1976, and sustained these levels in the next four elections even as turnout in other states declined, with an average turnout increase of 3.04% in EDR states and average decline of 1.69% in non-EDR states from 1976 to 1992. In the midterm elections from 1976 to 1990, the early adopting EDR states had an average turnout increase of 4.1%, while other states saw a decline of 1.1% (Fenster 1994). Knack (1999) finds that in the 1996 election, which saw turnout decline from 1992 levels throughout the country, states which had newly adopted EDR had only a 5.3% decline, while turnout in states that had adopted neither EDR nor NVRA's registration provisions since 1992 declined by 9.6%. However, North Carolina's unusual status of allowing SDR but not EDR from 2008 to 2013 means that comparisons with states which allow both should be taken with caution, as these findings may not be entirely generalizable to the case being studied.

Other authors, however, question the effectiveness of EDR/SDR as a means of increasing voter turnout. While King and Wambeam (1995/1996) find that EDR has produced an estimated six to nine million new voters, they argue that the earliest states to adopt EDR had more competitive party systems, more demographically upscale populations, and more permissive voting laws even prior to the implementation of EDR. Knack (1995), Rhine (1995) and Fitzgerald (2005) each argue that these states already had more active electorates and higher levels of participation at the time the registration reforms were adopted.

King and Wambeam's (1995/1996) comparison of early-adopting EDR states to demographically similar states without EDR finds that, among the EDR states, only in Wisconsin did EDR produce a statistically significant increase in turnout. They argue that turnout increases in other states cannot reliably be attributed to the implementation of EDR. Gans (2004) finds that EDR states actually had sharper declines in turnout from 1992 to 1996 than did non-EDR states, though larger increases from 1996 to 2000. Gans (2004) argues that EDR may be most effective in increasing turnout in elections with higher citizen interest. Bennett (1990) and Gans (1990) each find that overall voter turnout declined from 1960-1988, with declines observed even in North Dakota (which has no voter registration) and the long-standing EDR states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. Lloyd (2001) finds that, with respect to the 1980 election, registration closing dates were less significant as determinants of voting than the individual's expectation of voting and interest in participation.

It appears that SDR in North Carolina was a popular practice among first-time voters in 2008, but considerably less so in 2012. One advocate of same day registration

(Carbo 2008) specifically argues that the introduction of this practice was responsible for Obama's victory in the state that year. As the table below indicates, registration by this method dropped for all three categories of voters between the two elections, but substantially more so for registered Democrats. Indeed, a preliminary analysis indicates that this factor may be more responsible than any other for Obama's change in fortunes in the state between the two elections:

TABLE 2.1: Net growth of Same Day Registration, 2008 and 2012[19].

| Year | Democratic | Republican | Unaffiliated/Other[20] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2008 | 109,918 | 36,093 | 49,689 |
| 2012 | 51,761 | 24,637 | 12,755 |

Turnout Effects of Early Voting: Several authors have examined the combined turnout effects of both forms of convenience voting, in-person early voting and unrestricted absentee voting by mail. Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan (2009) argue that any analysis of voting reform must consider the interaction among the different practices, and that early voting has a positive effect on turnout only when combined with Election Day or same day registration.

In the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, more North Carolinians used One Stop early voting than voted on Election Day. Rosenfield (1994) presents arguments by supporters of early voting that it will increase turnout, especially among members of groups which have traditionally been politically underrepresented and those who find it difficult to get to their precinct polling place on a specific day. However, results in this area have been mixed, and few studies have actually indicated that early voting increases

[19] Compiled by the author from data supplied by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections. .

[20] The Libertarian Party had ballot access, and thus voters were able to register under that party label, in 2008 but not in 2012, when no parties other than Democratic and Republican were recognized by the state.

turnout. Shortly after the implementation of early voting in Tennessee, Richardson and Neeley (1996) found that its availability increased turnout in that state, but that it was not the most significant predictor of voter participation.

Hansen (2001) found that the turnout effects of early voting were mixed and marginal. Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum and Miller (2007) find that early voting does not increase turnout, while Giammo and Brox (2010) find no increase except when early voting was coupled with another election reform, and even in such cases, the increase is due to a short-lived novelty effect. Some other recent studies have actually found a negative correlation between the existence of early voting and voter turnout, including Gans (2004), Fitzgerald (2005), and Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan (2009). Leighley and Nagler (2009) find a positive but small increase in turnout in early voting states; these authors observed a smaller increase in states that adopted no-excuse early voting than in states requiring an excuse for not voting at one's precinct on Election Day.

Stein's 1998 study of early voting in Texas finds that its availability had a significant but marginal effect on turnout, and that new registrants were less likely to vote even given the opportunity to early vote. He argues that, given that the costs of voting are greater for poorer and less well educated voters, locating early voting sites in familiar locations not traditionally used for that purpose (such as shopping malls) may stimulate turnout.

In examining the long-term effect of early voting availability on turnout, Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey (2008) find that in most states, ten to twenty percent of voters early vote when it is first made available, and its use generally expands

over time. Haag's (2010) longitudinal studies of Texas elections indicate that early voting turnout in that state was high when it was first introduced, but declined over time.

Turnout Effects of Unrestricted Absentee Voting by Mail: While removing the restrictions on absentee voting by mail appears to have had relatively little impact on voter turnout in North Carolina, its effects are still worth exploring as part of this study. As previously stated herein, Oregon adopted a universal Vote-by-Mail system beginning in 1998, which has been the subject of significant research. Southwell (2004) reports a general increase in turnout since this reform has been adopted. Richey (2008) finds a 10% increase in turnout among Oregon's registered voters as a result of this reform. Berinsky, Burns and Traugott (2001) argue that this reform has increased long-term voter turnout, but only by making it easier for existing voters to vote. However, Gronke and Miller (2007) suggest that the increased turnout observed in these elections was due to a novelty effect and was not seen in later elections.

In general, Karp and Banducci (2000, 2001) also find that increased access to voting by mail increases turnout among those who are already predisposed to vote. Kousser and Mullin (2007) find that turnout did not increase among voters in small California precincts who were assigned to vote by mail rather than at a polling place on Election Day. Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum and Miller (2007) argue that vote-by-mail systems are the most effective at increasing turnout among the reforms being considered by the present work; this study echoes the previously cited authors' arguments that this comes primarily in the form of retention of existing voters rather than the recruitment of new voters.

## Partisanship and Election Reform

Previous research has found mixed results about the partisanship of early voters in comparison to Election Day voters. Kenski (2005) finds a significant Republican advantage among early voters in 2000 and a Democratic disadvantage among that group in 2004, and Stein (1998) finds that early voters are considerably more ideologically conservative than Election Day voters. However, several works find that early voters may be stronger partisans than Election Day voters (and thus make their decisions earlier), but that this is equally true of both parties' supporters, and thus there is no particular partisan advantage for either Democrats or Republicans in early voting (Stein 1998; Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum 2005; Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum 2005; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey 2008; Dyck, Gaines and Shaw 2009).

The reasons why One Stop voting in North Carolina in 2008 produced a significant Democratic advantage will be explored in the present research. As stated above, much of the literature examining the effect of convenience voting on partisan outcomes has primarily attributed it to the effects of mobilization efforts by candidates, campaigns and parties. The question has not been explored whether there may be an effect on turnout or partisan outcomes produced by partisan differences in implementation by local authorities within the same state. The present research seeks to contribute to the literature by examining this previously-unexamined aspect of the issue.

The present study will also explore the extent to which SDR contributed to Obama's victory in North Carolina in 2008. Many researchers, political actors and policymakers have long assumed that mobilization of larger numbers of economically disadvantaged, less well-educated, and minority voters would provide a benefit to the

Democratic Party (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978). Indeed, this expectation has largely driven Democratic partisan support and Republican partisan opposition to measures expanding registration opportunities since a national policy of EDR was unsuccessfully proposed by Democratic President Jimmy Carter in 1977 (Rosenstone and Wolfinger 1978; Calvert and Gilchrist 1993; Brians and Grofman 1999; Knack 1999 and 2001; Highton and Wolfinger 2001; De Oliviera 2009). The same partisan division has been observed in debates over the implementation of EDR/SDR in several states (De Oliviera 2009).

However, previous research on the partisan impact of registration reform has produced mixed findings. Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978) and Calvert and Gilchrist (1993) each find that any such partisan benefit would be minimal, given the relative similarity of nonvoters' political attitudes to those of current participants; in addition, an exploration of voters' and nonvoters' attitudes on specific issues led Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978) to conclude that the overall effect on the ideology of the electorate would be minimal. The relative liberalism or conservatism of nonvoters as compared to voters appears to vary according to the issue, providing no clear partisan advantage in either direction (Highton and Wolfinger 2001). Calvert and Gilchrist (1993) find that any such effect might be in the direction of opposition to incumbents and support for non-partisan or non-traditional candidates, rather than in the direction of support for a specific party. Highton and Wolfinger (2001) find that the partisan benefit of universal registration varies by type of election, and Highton (2004) finds that only a minimal Democratic gain would have resulted from universal turnout in the Senate elections from 1994 to 1998.

Calvert and Gilchrist's (1993) case study of Minnesota finds that, in the 1984 presidential election, Republican Ronald Reagan benefited from EDR in the home state of his opponent, Democrat Walter Mondale. Highton and Wolfinger (2001) find that, in 1992 and 1996, universal registration would have benefited Democrat Bill Clinton and disadvantaged Republicans George Bush and Bob Dole, while Knack (1999) finds no benefit to the 1996 Clinton candidacy from the adoption of EDR in three states since the previous presidential election. Knack (1999) also finds a negative relationship between registration reform and Democratic identification in 1996. Brians and Grofman (1999) find that states adopting EDR were five points more Democratic than non-adoption states prior to its enactment; this margin did not increase as a result of EDR, but EDR was positively correlated with political competitiveness. Alvarez, Hall and Llewellyn (2007) find that, while the pool of potential new registrants is disproportionately composed of self-identified Democrats and independents; however, previous research finds that the partisan consequences of this expansion would be minimal.

Several authors have found that early voters tend to be stronger partisans whose vote choices are based primarily on party label, rather than on the specific candidate characteristics or issues which more strongly influence the choices of Election Day voters. These voters make their voting decisions earlier than others and are thus more likely to vote early (Stein 1998; Neeley and Richardson 2001; Gronke 2004; Stein, Leighley and Owens 2004; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey 2008; Haag 2010). However, Gronke and Toffey (2008) find no difference in the firmness of political beliefs between the two groups in the elections of 2000 to 2006, and these authors find a

negative correlation between the strength of a voter's ideology and his probability of early voting.

Stein (1998) finds that early voters in Texas are considerably more conservative than Election Day voters. Kenski (2005) finds that Republican voters were significantly more likely to early vote in the 2000 election, that Democratic voters were significantly less likely to do so in 2004, and that strong partisanship was positively correlated with early voting for both parties in 2000. Two studies co-authored by Gronke in 2008 (Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey; Gronke and Toffey) find that early voters are more politically aware and more attuned to campaigns than their Election Day counterparts, the same conclusion reached by Stein (1998) and Neeley and Richardson (2001).

In the 2000 election, Kenski (2005) also finds that early voters demonstrated significantly higher support for Republican candidate George W. Bush than did Election Day voters, and that Republicans did a better job than Democrats of mobilizing early voters in both 2000 and 2004. However, other works find no particular partisan advantage for either Democrats or Republicans in early voting (Stein 1998; Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum 2005; Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum 2005; Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey 2008; Dyck, Gaines and Shaw 2009).

Obama's 2008 margin of victory in North Carolina is more than accounted for by One Stop votes, as seen below. It thus appears that the use of this practice in this election significantly benefited the Democratic candidate. In 2004, Democrat John F. Kerry also did relatively better with nonprecinct voters than with Election Day voters in North Carolina, though in that case it simply means that his margin of defeat by Republican

George W. Bush was less among the former group than among the latter (North Carolina State Board of Elections data; Bonner, Bauerlein and Raynor 2004). As is shown below, Obama's Election Day and mail votes declined more from 2008 to 2012 than his One Stop votes increased.

TABLE 2.2: North Carolina presidential vote by candidate and method, 2004-2012.[21]

| | 2004 | | 2008 | | 2012 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Kerry | Bush | Obama | McCain | Obama | Romney |
| Election Day | 1,003,716 | 1,325,665 | 950,239 | 1,109,975 | 738,784 | 964,107 |
| Non-Precinct | 522,133 | 635,901 | | | | |
| One Stop | | | 1,149,129 | 902,674 | 1,353,754 | 1,153,723 |
| Mail | | | 165,954 | 174,471 | 72,375 | 143,344 |
| Provisional | | | 12,815 | 12,097 | 13,478 | 9,221 |

Gans (2004) argues that early voters make their decision based on differential information; those who choose to vote before Election Day give up their access to late-breaking news that might affect their decisions. The National Commission on Federal Election Reform (2001) argues that citizens who cast their votes well in advance of the election do so with differential amounts of information, which Fitzgerald (2005) cautions may lead to ill-informed choices. Hansen (2001) also cites arguments that early voters might make judgments prematurely without having all the information necessary to a decision, and some might have voted differently if they had voted later.

## Election Reform and Voter Mobilization

The effect of early voting on political party and campaign mobilization strategies has been the subject of research by several authors. The adoption of this practice provides

[21] "Non-Precinct" is the total of One Stop, Absentee by Mail, and other categories of votes which could not be reliably broken down by category prior to 2008. Votes for candidates other than the Democrat and Republican in each election are excluded. Compiled by the author from data supplied by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections. Some discrepancies exist with the data presented in Table 1.1 which could not be resolved.

potential advantages as well as disadvantages to actors in the campaign. Gans (2004) argues that focusing on a single day rather than diffusing campaign efforts over a period of weeks is a much more effective use of a candidate's or party's resources. Gronke, Galanes-Rosenbaum, Miller and Toffey (2008) cite political consultants who suggest that early voting often increases the cost of a campaign by as much as 25%, due to the need to start voter mobilization earlier and sustain it for a longer time.

Early voting may, however, provide both an opportunity and a challenge for campaigns to more effectively target both potential early voters and Election Day voters, and several recent campaigns have incorporated this into their strategies. Giammo and Brox (2010) quote campaign operatives as saying that early voters and Election Day voters need to be targeted separately, while Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) argue that may early voting allows campaigns to more specifically target their supporters, while not repeatedly contacting those who have already voted. A necessary condition for this, according to Gronke (2004) and Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005), is the existence of, and access to, voter lists showing which people have voted early; with such lists, campaigns may reduce the costs of their mobilization efforts, but without this information, as Election Day approaches, campaigns may incur unnecessary extra costs and waste their voter appeals on those who have already cast their ballots. Fortier (2004) also argues that this information allows campaigns to "lock up" their early voting supporters in advance of Election Day, and focus on the remaining voters as Election Day approaches. Campaigns in which effective early voting mobilization appears to have occurred are the 1992 Clinton-Gore campaign in Texas, with a specific targeting effort for Hispanic voters (Stein and Garcia-Monet 1997), and

the 2008 Obama-Biden campaign nationally, which specifically targeted early voters while the McCain-Palin ticket did not (McDonald 2008b). A disadvantage to an early voting mobilization effort, however, according to Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum (2005) is that voters may be put off and discouraged from participating by a longer campaign period and broadcast of attack advertising over a longer amount of time.

Stein, Owens and Leighley (2003) argue that early voting only increases turnout when it is combined with strategically planned campaign mobilization. Lower turnout generally among Democratic voters means that Democratic candidates and party organizations would be more likely to engage in this type of mobilization as part of their electoral strategy. Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan (2009) argue that early voting only increases turnout when combined with other practices to increase access to participation, such as the ability to register on Election Day or on the same day that one wishes to early vote.

Obama's 2008 campaign targeted North Carolina, encouraged voter registration, and successfully mobilized voters (Christensen 2008; Masket 2009) in a way that the campaigns of Clinton, Gore and Kerry did not. In particular, Obama targeted early voters (White 2008; Bitzer 2010), and did so more successfully than McCain or the previous Democratic candidates. While the same strategy appears to have been used in 2012, the Romney campaign mounted a more effective counterattack than had McCain's. The Obama campaigns, in short, took advantage of the election reforms to be examined by this proposed research. The first campaign succeeded in winning North Carolina, while the second did not. The present research will explore the extent to which differences in

implementation of election reform may have contributed to the emergence of the two different results.

The present work will compare registration, patterns of turnout and convenience voting (One Stop and absentee by mail) in counties with consistently Democratic and consistently Republican-controlled commissions, and in areas where control of the commission changed during the period being studied. If partisanship affects election administration in these areas, then different patterns should be observed. This will be discussed in greater detail in the research design chapter which follows.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA, AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF VARIABLES

The previous chapters have introduced the theories upon which the present research is based, stated the research questions and the importance of examining North Carolina election returns to understand the significance of various types of election reform in this case. The study has also examined the work of previous authors in this area. This chapter will describe the method by which the present study will be conducted, and will explain the models needed to test the various research hypotheses related to the participation and partisan effects of election reform, and how differences in county-level program implementation may affect the outcome of each reform. In order to examine the effects of the election reforms on participation, it is necessary to have data on each county's population, voter registration, voter turnout, and political and demographic composition over the period of time before and after the implementation of these reforms.

The study will examine the implementation and effects of election reform on both registration and voting, because both of these steps are necessary to complete the task of officially registering one's preference in an election, and both steps have been the subject of reform in North Carolina during the period being studied. In addition, the partisan political impact of these reforms will be considered. A variety of dependent variables derived from population, registration, turnout, and election data will be used in several different Ordinary Least Squares regression equations to explore different aspects of the questions being raised, in accordance with the institutional theory that structural barriers

to registration and voting are primarily responsible for political nonparticipation. The study will include a variety of research hypotheses about the effects of election reform on participation.

## Unit of Analysis and Population Examined

The available data are aggregate in nature, and do not allow for examination of, or inferences about, individual behavior, such as a particular person's attitude about voting or opinion of a particular candidate. The unit of analysis is each county in North Carolina at the time of a particular election, e.g., Mecklenburg County in 2004 or Buncombe County in 2008. Variables denoting subgroups within each county include total voting age population; white and nonwhite voting age population; white and black registered voters; Democratic, Republican, unaffiliated and total registered voters, and voters for the Democratic, Republican and other presidential candidates, by method of voting where available, at the time of each election from 1992 to 2012. The complete list of variables used in this study is presented in a table later in this chapter.

## Data

The work uses county-level data from the presidential elections of 1992 through 2012. Dummy variables representing years, with 1992 as the omitted category, are used to denoted each county in each election as a unique case. The data include total and voting age[22] population data for each election year, in order to determine participation rates for each group in each county. The 2000 data are from the U.S. Census, while the

[22] The available data for this study do not break out voting-age population from voting-*eligible* population. It is important to note that not all persons 18 and over who are counted by the Census are eligible to vote. Adults who are ineligible to vote in North Carolina include non-citizens, those who are not legal residents of the state or who are registered elsewhere, those who have lived in the state for less than 30 days, and those who are serving a felony sentence or are on probation or parole. (North Carolina State Board of Elections, "Registering to Vote in North Carolina")

data from the remaining years are from Census Bureau estimates. A caveat is that, as will be discussed below, voter registration records classify voters by specific race, while the available Census data only categorize members of the population as either “white” or “nonwhite.” Thus it is not possible to directly calculate “black” voter participation as a percentage of “black” voting age population, although it is possible to do so for white voters and white VAP. Nonwhite voting age population is, however, included as a variable.

Voter registration and turnout statistics, election results by category of vote, and the number of One Stop sites used in each election have been obtained from the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections. Under the provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent amendments, during the period covered by this study, 40 North Carolina counties were required to report voter registration data by race, in order to establish a lack of discrimination in access to the process. In practice, these data are available for all 100 counties. Therefore, voters can be identified by racial categories. While the state identifies registered voters by a variety of racial and ethnic designators – white, black, American Indian, Hispanic, etc., the two groups of primary interest in this study are white and black registrants/voters, given that white citizens are the majority of the population, and black citizens have traditionally represented the state’s largest minority group and the group most affected by historical discrimination and denial of the right to vote.

For 2008 and 2012, the data include the net change in voter registration within 24 days of the election. This is a proxy for Same Day Registration; it represents the number

of same day registrants minus the number of purges[23] which took place during the same time period. Given that the cutoff date for registering to vote on Election Day is 25 days before the election, any net gain observed between the cutoff date and Election is due to same day registration.

As stated, registration data are available for several different groups of interest, including breakdown by party and by race. This allows for an exploration of any differential impact which a particular reform may have among a given population in a given area. For example, the populations of African-American registrants/voters and white registrants/voters in the same county can be examined and compared as distinct groups, and the populations of African-Americans in different counties can be examined and compared. The populations of registered Democrats in counties with Democratic-controlled commissions and with Republican-controlled commissions can be examined and compared, as can the populations of Democrats and Republicans in the same county. An important topic in election reform, and one which is of particular interest to the present study, is its effect upon populations who have traditionally been the victims of discrimination or underrepresentation in their use of the franchise, as mentioned in Chapters One and Two. Many of the authors whose work has been previously mentioned in this study have argued that these particular populations are particularly disadvantaged by structural barriers to registration and voting, and their work has focused on the extent to which election reform does – or does not – make the voting electorate more

[23] "In North Carolina, county boards of elections follow a comprehensive list maintenance schedule to remove names of individuals who are no longer eligible to be registered due to death, felony conviction, removal from the county, or lack of voter contact." "Lack of voter contact" means that the county board of elections is unable to locate or contact by mail someone who has not voted in two consecutive federal election cycles. The voter is then removed from the rolls. (North Carolina State Board of Elections, "Voter Registration Frequently Asked Questions")

demographically representative of the population as a whole. The data available for this study will allow for the examination of that question as it pertains to voters in North Carolina, where it is particularly relevant due to the state's history of discrimination and disenfranchisement. If the institutional theory is valid, the introduction of same day registration should increase the percentage of the voting age population which is registered, while the increased availability of One Stop voting and the removal of the excuse requirement for absentee voting by mail should each increase the percentage who actually vote.

The data also facilitate an examination of different partisan groups (registered Democrats, Republicans, and unaffiliated voters) in different partisan contexts; for example, the work will be able to compare the use of One Stop voting by Democratic voters in counties with Democratic or Republican control of their commissions. This will allow for a study of whether the effect of each reform is affected by partisan control of the authority (county commission) which primarily determines the resources available for each county to implement that reform. It will also allow for an exploration of whether the advantage predicted (by both sides) that One Stop voting would give the Democratic Party has, in fact, emerged.

The data include the number of votes cast for each candidate in each election, by type where available. Legally, One Stop votes are considered to be absentee votes in the same category as traditional absentee ballots submitted by mail, though a county may choose to report a separate count for these votes on its official election abstract. Thus, the data available for this research contains certain limitations. Data on vote by method (whether Election Day or absentee) were not available for 1992, although registration,

turnout and election return data are available, so the analyses below are able to use 1992 as a comparison year in several of the regression equations. In the second pre-reform baseline year of 1996, when an excuse was still required to vote absentee by mail and counties were not required to offer One Stop voting, only 27 of 100 counties reported separate absentee voting data. (Again, however, registration, turnout and election return data are available.) Thus, the 1996 data contain 73 cases where only the total vote is reported, missing observations of vote by type. Conversely, in 2008 and 2012, Election Day voting, absentee by mail, and One Stop data were available as separate categories for all 100 counties.

In 2000 and 2004, most counties reported mail absentee and One Stop votes as a single "absentee" category. The research can thus draw distinctions between precinct voting (at the polling place on Election Day) and non-precinct (Absentee by Mail or One Stop), but not specifically distinguish among precinct and One Stop, precinct and Absentee by Mail, or One Stop and Absentee by Mail, prior to 2008. Provisional, curbside, and other types of votes which do not fall into the above categories are included in vote totals, so that all votes are accounted for, but these are not examined as distinct categories because it is not possible to determine the method by which they were cast[24]. The dataset uses "nonprecinct" voting (One Stop plus absentee by mail) as a single category for the five latest elections, in order to allow for direct longitudinal comparisons across the entire time period examined. For the 2008 and 2012 elections, the data also

[24] A provisional vote is cast under certain circumstances when the voter rolls do not contain information on a prospective voter or he cannot document his eligibility to vote in the jurisdiction; for example, if the person does not appear on the list of registered voters in his precinct. It is subject to further investigation and is counted if the person's eligibility to vote in the jurisdiction is established. Curbside votes are cast by persons who are physically unable to enter a polling place, whether at a One Stop site or an established Election Day precinct. Some counties report small numbers of other categories of votes whose method of casting cannot be determined.

include One Stop and mail voting as separate categories, allowing for an examination of the separate effects of each method in those two elections. In both cases, Election Day votes are reported (subject to the limitations described above). The total votes cast for candidates other than the Democratic and Republican nominees (e.g., independent, Libertarian, Reform, Green, write-in) by each method, where available, are recorded as a single variable.

The percentage of county residents below the poverty line, and the percentage of adults who are high school graduates, will be used to control for the effects of socioeconomic status, consistent with the widely observed phenomenon that voting participation varies with income and particularly education (see, for example, Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980). These variables are included among the population characteristics variables. The socioeconomic data were not available for 1992 or 2004.

In order to examine whether there are differences in the implementation of each reform depending on budget control, the data also include information on partisan control of each County Commission during each election year, where this could be determined (there are some missing observations for each year except 2012). The data also include the number of One Stop sites used in each county in each year, which is expected to be the direct result of budgeting decisions. Counties are not coded for nonprecinct voting in 1992. For 1996, Guilford and Wake Counties, which reported One Stop votes as a separate category, are coded as 1, and all other counties are coded as 0. Beginning in 2000, the figure is the actual number of sites reported in each county; counties which did not operate satellite sites, but only permitted One Stop voting at the Board of Elections office or another single location, are coded as 1. The number of the county's registered

voters is then divided by the number of sites to determine the number of potential voters per site. A smaller number of voters per site would indicate greater availability or convenience of One Stop voting. A larger number of sites would imply more convenient access in terms of travel time, and a smaller number of voters per site would imply less time spent in the voting process itself, such as waiting in line. Both of these would be considered reductions in the "cost" of voting.

Voter registration and turnout percentages will be calculated as functions of the county's voting age population, and turnout as a function of its registered voters. Registration and turnout will also be calculated in terms of change from the previous election. These will be used to examine the effects of same day registration and nonprecinct/One Stop voting. If registration increases in 2008 and 2012 to a significantly greater degree than in previous elections, standardizing for population, it would appear that the effect is due to the introduction of same day registration. If turnout increases significantly as the availability of nonprecinct voting increases, it would appear that the effect is due to greater accessibility of One Stop voting and the removal of restrictions on absentee voting by mail. It is also expected that these effects will be greater among Democratic voters, and among voters in counties with Democratic-controlled commissions. The specific hypotheses associated with these expectations will follow later in this chapter.

## Measurement

The effects of a reform are measured by the change observed in the population of interest following its introduction. For example, the effect of the introduction and availability of same day registration is represented by the net change in registration

among each group of voters within 24 days preceding the elections of 2008 and 2012. The partisan effect of One Stop voting is examined by comparing the change in the Democratic and Republican candidates' vote percentages from previous elections. Partisan differences in the implementation of election reform are operationalized by a variable representing which party controlled the county commission at the time of each election. This enables an examination of whether Democratic and Republican-controlled commissions differ in their implementation of election reform, measured by the county's resources devoted to One Stop voting sites (which facilitate both early voting and same day registration). Commission memberships were determined through a search of various annual editions of the *North Carolina Directory of State and County Officials*; however, this source does not list members by party. The party control variable was constructed primarily by subsequently examining county- and state-provided election results for individual commission races, where available, to determine commissioners' partisan affiliations; where those data were not available, commissioners' party affiliations were determined through a search of relevant newspaper sources.[25]

This work follows that of many authors who have examined various types of registration requirements and voting procedures (including EDR or SDR) and demographic categories as independent variables, while examining state, county, group, or individual-level turnout rates as dependent variables. These include Rosenstone and Wolfinger (1978); Knack (1995 and 2001); Rhine (1995 and 1996); Highton (1997); Leighley and Nagler (1999); Brians and Grofman (1999 and 2001); Knack and White

[25] These included various editions of the Asheville *Citizen-Times*; *The Charlotte Observer*; the Greensboro *News & Record*; the Greenville *Daily Reflector; The* (Raleigh) *News & Observer;* and the *Winston-Salem Journal*.

(2000); Lloyd (2001); Alvarez, Ansolabehere and Wilson (2002); Fitzgerald (2005); Wolfinger, Highton and Mullin (2005); McDonald (2008); Burden, Canon, Mayer and Moynihan (2009); Lee (2010); Rigby and Springer (2010); and Larocca and Klemanski (2011).

These models allow a determination of the effects of specific types of procedural changes in registration and voting, which would be consistent with the institutional theory that structural barriers are primarily responsible for nonvoting and thus that the removal of those barriers would increase participation. The models also allow for an examination of the extent to which their impact may vary for different demographic or geographic subgroups of voters. This would be consistent with the institutional theory that structural barriers have differential effects on different groups, with participation largely determined by socioeconomic factors including income and education.

The work uses a cross-sectional panel time series model, similar to the state-level analyses conducted by Knack (1995), Rhine (1995) and Fitzgerald (1995). This is an appropriate method, given that the questions of interest involve changes in the behavior of a population over time, but the population of each county's voters in each election is not identical (Schutt 2006). Ordinary Least Squares multivariate regression ("quite probably the most often utilized model for pooled data" [Stimson 1985] and "the workhorse of political methodology [Beck and Katz 1995])) will be used to examine the extent to which changes in turnout and results can be explained by the effects of each type of reform across the elections being examined, and by the partisan context of each county, with 1992 as the starting point (subject to the previously described limitations on the data which were available for this year) and the change from 1992 to 1996 used as a

baseline, given that no reforms were adopted between these two elections and a different reform was adopted before each of the three following elections. The use of Ordinary Least Squares regression is appropriate because the dependent variable in each case is continuous and, in most cases, expressed as a percentage, even though it is bounded by 0 to 100. While the dependent variable is bounded and does not strictly meet the assumptions of OLS, for ease of interpretation, OLS is used here. Robust standard errors are used to account for the effects of heteroskedasticity produced by variations in the size of counties and in their population changes between elections. This addresses a concern raised by Beck and Katz (1995) with respect to the use of OLS as a technique for the analysis of time-series cross-section data. The Durbin-Watson test for autocorrelation is also employed. In the absence of these diagnostic and corrective measures, OLS may produce inaccurate estimates of standard errors which lead to overconfidence in the predictive value of the model (Beck and Katz 1995).

Each procedural reform (early voting, same day registration, and no excuse absentee voting) will be examined, both individually and in combination with the others, for its impact on turnout in the relevant elections. How many voters have chosen to take advantage of each? Which political or demographic groups have been most affected by these reforms, in terms of their participation in voting? How do same day registrants, early voters, and absentee-by-mail voters resemble and differ, demographically and politically, from their counterparts who register and vote by traditional methods? And to what extent has each given reform succeeded in increasing citizen participation in elections, particularly among the traditionally underrepresented or members of those groups who are least likely to be engaged in politics?

In addition to the effects of each one of these reforms and practices, they must be examined in relationship to each other. Do various combinations of reforms, e.g., same day registration and early voting, complement each other, or do they produce opposing effects? The interactions of these reforms therefore must be examined as well.

The first concept of interest is the effect of election reform, specifically the availability of same day registration and One Stop voting, on registration and turnout. Does making registration easier increase registration? Does making it possible to register and vote in the same step increase voting? Does making voting easier increase voting? This will be measured by dependent variables representing the percentage of voting age population who are registered, the percentage of registered voters who turn out to vote, and the percentage of voting age population who turn out, as presented in the table below.

## Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are drawn from the literature. Following each hypothesis is the dissertation chapter where the specific hypothesis will be tested.

Hypothesis One: Counties with Democratic control of the commission will devote greater resources to facilitate nonprecinct voting than other counties, in the form of more early voting sites than those with Republican-controlled commissions (during the years in which early voting is considered). Hypothesis 1A: This will produce greater use of nonprecinct voting in these counties. These hypotheses are explored in Chapter Four.

Hypothesis Two: The availability of same day registration will significantly increase voter registration.

Hypothesis Three: The availability of same day registration, One Stop voting and no-excuse absentee voting by mail will significantly increase turnout of registered voters.

Hypothesis Four: The availability of same day registration, One Stop voting and no-excuse absentee voting by mail will significantly increase turnout of voting age population. The effects of election reform on registration and turnout are explored in Chapter Five.

Hypothesis Five: The availability of same day registration will increase Democratic registration to a significantly greater degree than Republican registration. Here, the independent variable is the availability of SDR, and the dependent variable is the difference between the percentage in change of Democratic and of Republican registrants.

Hypothesis Six: Different partisan groups will differentially use the opportunities provided by election reform. In particular, Democratic voters will take significantly greater advantage of nonprecinct voting (both One Stop and absentee by mail) than Republican voters. The independent variables are those representing the availability of each form of nonprecinct voting, and the dependent variable is the difference in the percentage of the vote for each candidate which is cast by each method (e.g., the percentage of the Democratic vote which is cast One Stop minus the percentage of the Republican vote which is cast One Stop). Partisan differences in the use of the opportunities provided by election reform are explored in Chapter Six.

Hypothesis Seven: Same day registration, One Stop voting and no-excuse absentee voting by mail will benefit the Democratic candidate to a greater degree than the Republican candidate. The independent variables are those representing the availability of each election reform, and the dependent variable is the difference in the rate of growth in Democratic and Republican vote between each election. The partisan effects of

election reform on the outcome of presidential elections in North Carolina are explored in Chapter Seven.

In each case, the regressions testing election reform effects will include controls for party control of the county commission, the county's number of One Stop sites, and the ratio of potential voters to sites (which are used as dependent variables for Hypotheses 1 and 1A). While the raw number of sites is largely a function of county population and will not necessarily be determinative of registration or turnout percentages, it is expected that a smaller ratio of potential voters to sites will make same day registration and One Stop voting more convenient (in terms of time spent in the registration and voting process), thus lowering the "costs" of participation as they have been expressed in the present work.

Socioeconomic variables are also relevant here. Given the observed correlations between wealth and education and voting, It is expected that poorer populations will be less likely to participate, and that better-educated populations will be more likely to do so. Given the historically observed disparity between registration and voting rates between white and black citizens, it is important to consider racial differences in voting as a control. It is expected that the county's white percentage of VAP will have a positive effect on registration and voting.

Another variable of interest is the net registration change within 24 days of the election as a percentage of total registration. It is expected that a county with a higher percentage of new registrants will have a higher percentage of VAP who are registered. The net effects of same day registration in 2008 and 2012 are included as an independent variable in the equations examining turnout and partisan impact, while the registered

percentage of voting age population is also used as a dependent variable in the equations examining the effects of election reform on registration.

With respect to the turnout percentage of registered voters and of voting age population, the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct (One Stop or absentee by mail) is also of interest. It is expected that a higher frequency of nonprecinct voting will positively affect turnout both of registered voters and of the VAP as a whole. Thus, the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct is used as an independent variable predicting the effects on turnout and election results in all years for which the voting method data are available; the percentages cast One Stop and absentee by mail are used as separate independent variables in the equations examining turnout and results in 2008 and 2012.

Same day registration and One Stop voting are also expected to have a partisan effect which will benefit the Democratic Party. The Democratic (potential) voting coalition contains a larger proportion of people (less-well-educated, poorer) who are less likely to vote or whose participation is conditioned on circumstances. The Republican coalition contains a larger proportion of voters whose personal characteristics (race, wealth and education) make them more likely to vote regardless of circumstances or procedural change. Therefore, it is expected that any change in procedure will have a greater effect on the more volatile Democratic electorate. This will be explored using the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote in each election as a dependent variable in equations measuring the effect of each respective election refornm.

These variables will be analyzed by a series of regression equations with dependent variables including the percentage of the county's vote which is cast nonprecinct; registration percentage of voting age population; turnout percentage of

registered voters and of voting age population; the percentage of each party's candidate's vote which is cast nonprecinct (with specific attention to One Stop and mail voting in 2008 and 2012); and the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote in each election. Each of these will be explored in turn in the chapters to follow. Below is a table listing the contents of the dataset used and the number of counties for which each datum is available in each election. Following the table is a discussion of the concepts and regression equations for which each variable is relevant and applicable.

TABLE 3.1: List of variables and number of counties (out of 100) for which data are available in each year, 1992-2012.

| | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County name | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Year 1996 | N/A | 100 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 |
| Year 2000 | N/A | N/A | 100 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 |
| Year 2004 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | N/A | N/A | 100 |
| Year 2008 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | N/A | 100 |
| Year 2012 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 |
| Democratic control of Commission (1=yes) | 0 | 0 | 72 | 82 | 81 | 100 | 335 |
| Total voting age population | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| White VAP | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Nonwhite VAP | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| White percentage of VAP | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Total change in VAP since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Change in white VAP since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Change in nonwhite VAP since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Registered Democrats | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Registered Republicans | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Registered unaffiliated/other | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| White registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Black registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Total registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Democratic pct. of registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Republican pct. of registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Unaffiliated/other pct. of reg. voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |

| TABLE 3.1 CONTINUED | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White pct. of registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Black pct. of registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Pct. of VAP which is registered | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Net D registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Net R registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Net U/O registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Net W registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Net B registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Net total registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Net D registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Net R registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Net U/O registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Net W registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Net B registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Net total registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Pct. D registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Pct. R registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Pct. U/O registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Pct. W registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Pct. B registration change since previous election[26] | 0 | 99 | 99 | 99 | 100 | 100 | 497 |
| Pct. total registration change since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Pct. D registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |

[26] Graham County had one black registered voter in the early portion of the period covered by this study. Those cases have been excluded from this portion of the analysis because any "percentage change" in this number would obviously represent an unreliable outlier.

| TABLE 3.1 CONTINUED | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pct. R registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Pct. U/O registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Pct. W registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Pct. B registration change during SDR period | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Pct. total reg. change during SDR | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Difference in percentage points between Democratic and Republican change in registration during SDR | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 100 | 100 | 200 |
| Democratic total vote | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Republican total vote | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Other total vote | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Total vote cast for President | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Turnout percentage of registered voters | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Turnout percentage of voting age population | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Number of One Stop sites[27] | 0 | 2 | 99 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 401 |
| Change in number of One Stop sites | N/A | 2 | 99 | 99 | 100 | 100 | 400 |
| Democratic Election Day vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99[28] | 95[29] | 100 | 421 |
| Democratic nonprecinct vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Republican Election Day vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Republican nonprecinct vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Other Election Day vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Other nonprecinct vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Total vote cast on Election Day | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Total vote cast nonprecinct | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Democratic % of total vote | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Republican % of total vote | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 600 |
| Percentage of residents below poverty line | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 81 | 100 | 281 |

[27] Only Guilford and Wake Counties reported these data for 1996. The number of One Stop sites in Columbus County in 2000 could not be determined from the available information. This affects both the raw number of counties included for that year and the number included in the "change" variable for 2004.

[28] Lee County did not report vote by method in 2004. This affects the number of observations for the following eight variables.

[29] Bertie, Chatham, Duplin and Northampton did not report vote by method in 2008. Lee did not differentiate in its reporting between One Stop and absentee by mail. This affects the number of

| TABLE 3.1 CONTINUED | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of those 25 and older who are high school graduates | 0 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 81 | 100 | 281 |
| Ratio of reg. voters to One Stop sites | 0 | 2 | 99 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 401 |
| Percentage of vote cast on Election Day | 0 | 27 | 100 | 100 | 96 | 100 | 423 |
| Percentage of vote cast nonprecinct | 0 | 27 | 100 | 100 | 96 | 100 | 423 |
| Democratic percentage of Election Day vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Republican percentage of Election Day vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Democratic percentage of nonprecinct vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Republican percentage of nonprecinct vote | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast on Election Day | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast on Election Day | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct | 0 | 27 | 100 | 99 | 95 | 100 | 421 |
| Democratic votes cast Absentee by Mail | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Democratic votes cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Republican votes cast Absentee by Mail | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Republican votes cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Other votes cast Absentee by Mail | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 93 | 100 | 193 |
| Other votes cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 93 | 100 | 193 |
| Total votes cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 93 | 100 | 193 |
| Percentage of total vote cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 93 | 100 | 193 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast by mail | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast by mail | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Democratic percentage of One Stop vote | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |
| Republican percentage of One Stop vote | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 100 | 195 |

| TABLE 3.1 CONTINUED | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pct. change in turnout of registered voters since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Percentage change in turnout of VAP since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Percentage change in registration of VAP | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Change in Democratic percentage of vote since previous election | 0 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 500 |
| Change in percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 95 |
| Change in percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 95 | 95 |

Each county's voting age population, number of registered voters by race and party, turnout in the presidential election, and the number of votes cast for each candidate are available for all 100 counties in all six elections. These data are used to construct other variables. The effect of same day registration, which was only available in 2008 and 2012, is represented by the net change in registration within 24 days of the election (the period between the 25-day registration cutoff for eligibility to participate on Election Day, and Election Day itself). As discussed elsewhere in this work, "net change" is defined as the number of same day registrants minus the number of purges from the voter rolls during the same period.

The number of votes cast on Election Day and the number cast nonprecinct are not available for 1992, and are available for only 27 counties in 1996. These data are available (with a small number of exceptions[30]) for all counties beginning in 2000. These data are used to construct dependent variables representing the percentage of votes cast, and cast for each candidate, on Election Day and nonprecinct for the four most recent studies. The 2000 and 2004 data, however, do not allow for the exploration of mail voting

[30] Separate data were not reported by Lee County in 2004, nor by Bertie, Chatham, Duplin and Northampton in 2008.

and One Stop voting as separate categories. Only in 2008 and 2012 are Absentee by Mail and One Stop voting consistently reported as separate categories[31], and only for those elections are the percentages of votes cast by each method used as dependent variables.

The concept of ease of early voting will be defined in terms of its availability. This will be operationalized as the number of One Stop sites in a county in each election, standardized for the population of voter registration through the construction of a variable representing "voters per site," or the ratio of registered potential voters to the number of sites. This variable will be used in the analyses of the partisan implementation of election reform (Chapter Four), the effects of election reform on registration and turnout (Chapter Five), partisan differences in the use of election reform (Chapter Six), and the partisan effect of election reform (Chapter Seven). One Stop voting was not universally available in the state until 2000, so the data for this is not available for 1992 and is only available in 1996 for the two counties which reported it as a separate category (Guilford and Wake). Beginning in 2000, each county's number of One Stop sites is consistently reported.

Where available, a variable representing the incumbent party in control of each county commission at the time of each election is used, in the form of a dummy variable with Democratic control coded as 1 and other coded as 0[32]. This allows for the exploration in Chapter Four of partisan differences in the implementation of election reform – whether party control of a commission has a significant effect on issues such as

[31] Lee County continued to report One Stop and Absentee by Mail as a single category in 2008, so it is excluded from the separate analysis of those categories in that year and in the examination of change between 2008 and 2012, as are the four counties mentioned in Footnote 30 which did not report vote by method in 2008.

[32] The only case in which non-Democratic control does not mean Republican control is the case of the Jackson County Commission in 2012, with two Democrats, two Republicans, and one independent.

the availability of One Stop voting. The use of nonprecinct voting, another primary subject of Chapter Four, will be explored through the use of variables representing the percentage of vote cast in each year on Election Day and by nonprecinct means (One Stop or absentee by mail). The primary dependent variable of interest in this case is the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct. These data are available for the total vote cast and for the vote cast for the Democratic and the Republican candidates. This will allow for an exploration of partisan differences in voting method, the primary focus of Chapter Six. As previously stated, votes by method are not available for 1992, and are only available for 27 counties for 1996. One Stop and absentee by mail votes are not reported separately for 2000 and 2004, so the only longitudinal comparison available for all four of the most recent elections studied is "nonprecinct" rather than a specific examination of One Stop and mail voting practices. One Stop and absentee by mail are reported as separate categories by 95 counties in 2008 and all 100 counties in 2012, which allows for a comparison of patterns of voting method by partisans of different candidates in these two elections.

Registration and turnout are the primary focus of Chapter Five. Voter registration data, voting age population data, and the total number of votes cast in each presidential election are available for all six elections. These are used to construct dependent variables representing the percentage of voting age population who are registered, the percentage of turnout of registered voters, and the percentage of turnout of voting age population, in each election. It is also possible to measure the change in each of these percentages from one election to the next, to determine whether the implementation of a particular election reform in a particular year (universally available One Stop voting in 2000, universally

available absentee voting by mail in 2004, and same day registration in 2008) causes a significantly greater change in registration and/or turnout than are observed in other elections.

Chapter Seven examines the partisan effects of election reform, with the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote in each election as the primary dependent variable. Also considered are the Democratic candidate's percentage of vote by each method (Election Day, nonprecinct, and One Stop/mail where available). This chapter also explores the change in Democratic vote share between each of the elections, so that the partisan effect of the introduction of a specific reform in a specific election can be examined.

Variables representing socioeconomic characteristics of the population are used as controls where available. The percentage of the county's voting age population which is white is available throughout the period examined. The percentage of persons over 25 who are high school graduates, and the percentage of the county's population under the federally defined poverty line, are available for 81 counties in 1996, 2000, 2008 and 2012. Given the widely observed disparities in voting rates according to race, wealth and education, it is important to control for these characteristics in order to determine the extent to which variations in political participation, voting method or candidate preference may be the results of changes in election procedures rather than simply examples of the existing socioeconomic differences in the population. These data are used to construct independent variables for each equation in which the data are available.

# CHAPTER FOUR: THE EFFECT OF PARTISANSHIP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTION REFORM

The previous chapter outlined the data collection and construction of models allowing for an examination of whether, consistent with institutional theory, reducing the costs of voting will increase voter registration and voter turnout, and whether such an increase would have partisan effects. How does this reduction in costs affect the behavior of the electorate, and the outcome of their choices? While the implementation of these laws over time in the state of North Carolina may have reduced the costs of voting, each county in the state had a certain amount of discretion in implementing the regulations, as well as a certain level of constraint imposed by budgetary limitations. This chapter will examine whether partisan considerations affected that discretion. Kimball, Kropf and Battles (2006) argue that partisan election authorities may administer laws and procedures in ways which benefit their party and its voters. The present research will explore the extent to which this may also be true of partisan elected officials' funding decisions which affect the administration of the election.

The previous chapter outlined a potential variable for measuring partisan differences in the implementation of election reform on the local level, in the form of partisan control of the county commission. The present chapter implements the various tests of the hypotheses outlined. The effects of election reform can be isolated by controlling for a number of county-level variables which are theoretically related to the dependent variables of voter registration, voter turnout and partisan turnout. These

include poverty level, education level, and race of the county's population. This chapter advances the test of partisan test of implementation, as outlined in the previous chapter, by controlling for the partisan control of the county commission, the body which determines the election budget in each county.

The analysis begins with a series of bivariate tests using the Democratic commission control variable, constructed as a dummy variable (Democratic control =1, other=0)[33]. The years 1992 and 1996 were not included in this portion of the analysis, and a total of 65 observations are missing for the years 2000, 2004 and 2008. This yields an N of 335 observations in most cases. First, an examination of the relationship between party control and election year shows no significant correlation for any of the four years examined. It is thus expected that the partisan effects of implementation will not significantly vary by year, and that any observed changes in registration, turnout or voting behavior can be attributed to the effects of the reforms themselves:

TABLE 4.1: Bivariate correlations of Democratic control of county commission with election year, 2000-2012.[34]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Year 2000 (1=yes, 0=no) | .011 | .844 | 335 |
| Year 2004 (1=yes, 0=no) | -.022 | .690 | 335 |
| Year 2008 (1=yes, 0=no) | .041 | .450 | 335 |
| Year 2012 (1=yes, 0=no) | -.028 | .611 | 335 |

The next section of the analysis presents its findings related to bivariate correlations with commission control and certain population characteristics of the county, including racial composition, and education and poverty levels where available. These

[33] As mentioned in Footnote 32, the only available case in which "Other" does not mean Republican control is Jackson County in 2012.

[34] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

characteristics will be used throughout the analysis to control for the effects of socioeconomic factors and isolate the identified effects of election reform.

TABLE 4.2: Bivariate correlations of Democratic control of county commission with population characteristics (2000, 2008, 2012).[35]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| White percentage of voting age population | -.616 | .000** | 335 |
| Percentage of county population under poverty line | .405 | .000** | 244 |
| Percentage of persons 25+ who are high school graduates | -.112 | .083 | 243 |
| Percentage of voting age population which is registered | .089 | .103 | 335 |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

There is a strong, significant, negative correlation between the white percentage of voting age population and Democratic control of the commission. There is a moderate, significant, positive correlation between party control and the percentage of the county's population which is under the poverty line, with poorer counties more likely to be Democratic. There is no significant correlation between registered percentage of voting age population, or the education variable, with party control of the commission.

The next table indicates the extent to which party control of the county commission may influence the county voters' use of same day registration in the 2008 and 2012 elections. The "net change" variable represents the difference between the number of registered voters in each group on Election Day, and the number who were registered 25 days before the election, which is the cutoff date for voting on Election Day. The "net change" represents the number of people who registered within 24 days of the election, who are by definition same day registrants, minus the number of voter

[35] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Education and poverty data were not available for 1992, 1996 or 2004, and some observations were missing for 2000 and 2008.

purges during the same period. This measures the net effect of Same Day Registration on the county's registration totals.

TABLE 4.3: Bivariate correlations of Democratic control of county commission with county voters' use of Same Day Registration in 2008 and 2012.[36]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Democrats who are same day registrants | .184 | .013* | 181 |
| Percentage of Republicans who are same day registrants | .233 | .002** | 181 |
| Percentage of unaffiliated/other who are same day registrants | .055 | .459 | 181 |
| Percentage of white voters who are same day registrants | .116 | .119 | 181 |
| Percentage of black voters who are same day registrants | -.030 | .684 | 181 |
| Same day registration as percentage of total registration | .193 | .009** | 181 |

* Sig $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

The positive and significant correlation between Democratic commission control and same day registrants as a percentage of total registration indicates that SDR is more common in counties with Democratic-controlled commissions. Given that SDR takes place at a One Stop voting site, and the evidence (presented in Table 4.4, below) that Democratic-controlled commissions devote greater resources to making One Stop voting easier, it stands to reason that SDR should be easier in these counties as well. This is true for the subgroups comprising registered voters of both parties, but it is interesting to note that Republicans in Democratic-controlled counties appear to take greater advantage of SDR than Democrats do, given that the correlation observed between commission control and the percentage of Republicans who are same day registrants is stronger and more significant than that observed for the percentage of Democrats using SDR. There was no significant correlation observed between partisan commission control and use of SDR by either racial group, or by unaffiliated voters.

[36] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

The next section of the analysis observes the correlation between commission control and voters' choice of voting method, whether Election Day or nonprecinct (which includes both One Stop voting and absentee voting by mail). This section also analyzes the variables measuring the availability of One Stop voting, in order to address the central question of whether party control of a commission indirectly affects the availability and use of nontraditional voting methods by its citizens.

TABLE 4.4: Bivariate correlations among Democratic control of county commission, voting method and voter turnout, 2000-2012.[37]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast on Election Day | -.058 | .287 | 333 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast on Election Day | -.012 | .822 | 333 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct | .060 | .276 | 333 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct | .018 | .740 | 333 |
| Percentage of total vote cast on Election Day | -.057 | .301 | 332 |
| Percentage of total vote cast nonprecinct | .071 | .201 | 332 |
| Potential voters per One Stop site | -.197 | .000** | 334 |
| Turnout percentage of county's registered voters | -.109 | .047* | 335 |
| Turnout percentage of county's voting age population | -.020 | .714 | 335 |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

There does not appear to be a significant correlation between party control of a county commission and partisan choice of voting method. There is a weak, significant, negative correlation between Democratic commission control and the turnout percentage of the county's registered voters, but no significant correlation between party control and turnout percentage of overall voting age population. This indicates that Democratic-controlled counties may have a smaller proportion of registered voters who actually vote, notwithstanding the greater relative availability of One Stop voting. This finding would be consistent with the findings of Gans (2004) and other authors previously cited herein, that making early voting easier does not actually lead to its greater use.

[37] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

There is a weak, significant, negative correlation between Democratic commission control and potential voters per One Stop site. The fewer the number of potential voters per site, the more readily available – and thus easier – One Stop voting may be, since the number of other voters waiting to use the polls affects the time required to wait in line and complete the process of voting. This would represent a greater potential reduction in the Downsian "costs" of voting, which would seem to indicate that Democratic-controlled counties are slightly more willing than their Republican counterparts to reduce the structural barriers which the institutional theory of participation argues are primarily responsible for nonvoting. However, the analysis seems to indicate that this does not directly translate into greater usage of One Stop voting, given the lack of significant correlation between commission control and the percentages of votes which were respectively cast on Election Day and nonprecinct.

The next section of this chapter will be a multivariate analysis to examine the extent to which party control of the county commission may affect the percentage of the county's presidential vote which is cast nonprecinct. An additional analysis will be conducted with specific respect to the use of One Stop voting in 2008 and 2012 (as previously noted, separate data for One Stop and mail voting could not be consistently obtained for previous elections). The independent variables used will be party control of the commission, white percentage of voting age population, high school graduation percentage, percentage of population below the federally defined poverty level, potential voters per One Stop site (a variable which, as noted, represents the relative availability of One Stop voting), and the net registration change produced by Same Day Registration (as previously noted, this statistic represents the change in registration within 24 days of the

election, calculated as same day registrants minus purges during the same period). As noted in the previous chapter, Ordinary Least Squares regression, the technique used in this analysis, assumes homoskedasticity in error variation; the models have thus been checked for the presence of heteroskedasticity, and robust standard errors are used throughout to correct for this issue.

The first multivariate analysis uses election year dummies as independent variables to compare nonprecinct voting in the baseline year of 1996 to its use in subsequent years:

TABLE 4.5: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct as the dependent variable and year dummies as independent variables, 2000-2012. (n=425) [38]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0359037 | .0050498 | 7.11 | 0.000 | . |
| Year 2000 | .1078283 | .0080399 | 13.41 | 0.000** | .2024959 |
| Year 2004 | .2343539 | .0130003 | 18.03 | 0.000** | .4385715 |
| Year 2008 | .5469842 | .0115261 | 47.46 | 0.000** | 1.02363 |
| Year 2012 | .5445213 | .0103971 | 52.37 | 0.000** | 1.022583 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .8316.
Adjusted R-squared .8300.
Root MSE .09324.

This model shows that nonprecinct voting has increased in each year since universal One Stop voting was introduced in 2000, and all years show significantly greater nonprecinct voting than the baseline year of 1996. Each election year variable is significant with a positive coefficient, and the greatest observed increase occurs between 2004 and 2008, consistent with previously reported findings. The next model will incorporate variables to control for socioeconomic factors, Democratic control of the

[38] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections. Nonprecinct data for 1992 were not available, and the year 1996 was excluded from the equation due to collinearity.

county commission, and the relative availability of One Stop voting, and the introduction of same day registration. This includes the years 2000, 2008 and 2012. Education and poverty data were not available for 1992, 1996 or 2004, and in addition, there are some missing observations for 2008.

TABLE 4.6: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct as the dependent variable and election and socioeconomic factors as independent variables (2000, 2008, 2012). (n=242) [39]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -1.323984 | .1798999 | -7.36 | 0.000 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0571666 | .0240204 | -2.38 | 0.018* | -.1318347 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0003713 | .0008054 | -.046 | 0.645 | -.0287416 |
| Poverty rate | .0178211 | .0029113 | 6.12 | 0.000** | .4078776 |
| High school graduation rate | .0206513 | .0015321 | 13.48 | 0.000** | .6024721 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -3.30e-06 | 4.52e-07 | -7.29 | 0.000** | -.3401597 |

* Sig. p < .05, ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared .5580.
Adjusted R-squared .5487.
Root MSE .14578

In this model, the education, poverty and voters per site variables have the greatest significance and influence, followed by party control of the county commission. The county's high school graduation rate appears to have a highly influential positive effect on its use of nonprecinct voting. The significance of party control of the county commission differs from the findings of the bivariate analysis. This would seem to indicate that another independent variable in the multivariate equation is removing the error variance found in the bivariate model, thus allowing the party control variable to become significant at the multivariate level.

[39] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Education and poverty data were not available for 1992, 1996 or 2004.

The racial composition of the voting age population is not significant. It would appear that socioeconomic factors play a greater role in determining the use of nonprecinct voting than does election reform; indeed, if education ranks as the most influential factor, this may support Berinsky's (2005) argument that the availability of nonprecinct voting does indeed contribute to the further stratification of the electorate, by making voting more convenient for existing voters while not drawing in new voters.

The next table specifically examines the percentage of vote cast One Stop in the elections of 2008 and 2012:

TABLE 4.7: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast One Stop in 2008 and 2012 as the dependent variable. (n=168) [40]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .1945899 | .1384278 | 1.41 | 0.162 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0160292 | .0172412 | 0.93 | 0.354 | .0832767 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0017231 | .0005488 | -3.14 | 0.002** | -.3066977 |
| Poverty rate | .0001115 | .0021009 | 0.05 | 0.958 | .0057006 |
| High school graduation rate | .0060106 | .0014634 | 4.11 | 0.000** | .3406404 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -8.90e-07 | 8.29e-07 | -1.07 | 0.285 | -.0871696 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .1767.
Adjusted R-squared .151.
Root MSE .089035.

In this model, education and white percentage of voting age population emerge as the only significant variables, with education both most significant and most influential. Party control of the commission, poverty rate, and the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites are not significant here. Thus, it does not appear that election reform factors significantly affected the use of One Stop voting in the two elections for which the data could be obtained.

[40] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

The following tables examine the individual elections for which the relevant data are available, beginning in 2000. This will allow for an examination of the effect of each specific reform in the year in which it was introduced. A model incorporating all of the year variables as well as the socioeconomic and election reform variables in a single equation could not be produced due to collinearity issues resulting from missing observations in various categories.

TABLE 4.8: Multivariate regression equation using percentage of vote cast nonprecinct in 2000 as the dependent variable. (n=71) [41]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.1620084 | .1109279 | -1.46 | 0.149 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0149415 | .017127 | 0.87 | 0.386 | .1289398 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0009101 | .000587 | 1.55 | 0.126 | .2458739 |
| Poverty rate | .0016829 | .0024619 | 0.68 | 0.497 | .1157064 |
| High school graduation rate | .0018644 | .0014331 | 1.30 | 0.198 | .1961998 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -3.87e-07 | 2.59e-07 | -1.50 | 0.139 | -.2249219 |
| Registered percentage VAP | .0957817 | .0816515 | 1.17 | 0.245 | .1409158 |

R-squared .1473.
Adjusted R-squared .0674.
Root MSE .05621.

None of the variables emerge as significant in this equation. For the purposes of evaluating the impact on political participation of the introduction of universally available One Stop voting, it appears that in this election, this policy change did not produce wide enough use to have a significant impact. Nor did county commission control or the socioeconomic composition of the potential electorate significantly affect the use of nonprecinct voting in this election.

[41] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Missing observations are due to lack of data on party control of county commissions for 28 counties, and on the number of One Stop sites in Columbus County.

The next equation examines the 2004 election.

TABLE 4.9: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct in 2004 as the dependent variable. (n=81)[42]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .3027807 | .2034349 | 1.49 | 0.141 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0054592 | .0490487 | 0.11 | 0.912 | .0221063 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0007104 | .0013059 | 0.54 | 0.588 | .0943465 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.01e-06 | 6.05e-07 | -3.33 | 0.001 | -.3828874 |
| Registered percentage VAP | -.030059 | .164245 | -0.18 | 0.855 | -.0195735 |

R-squared .1527
Adjusted R-squared .108.
Root MSE .1173302.

In 2004, for the percentage of total vote cast nonprecinct, only the voters per site variable is significant, with a negative coefficient indicating that the greater availability of One Stop voting does increase the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct. However, this was also the year in which restrictions on absentee voting by mail were removed. Given the lack of separate data to distinguish between mail voting and One Stop, it is impossible to determine the specific effect on participation in this election which was produced by making mail voting universally available. The next tables examine the effects of the use of One Stop and mail voting in 2008.

TABLE 4.10: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast One Stop in 2008 as the dependent variable. (n=68) [43]

[42] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections. U.S. Census data on socioeconomic characteristics were unavailable for this year. Missing observations are due to lack of data on party control of county commissions for 18 counties, and Beaufort County did not report Election Day and absentee voting separately in this election.

[43] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Missing observations are due to lack of data on party control of county commissions for 19 counties, education and poverty data for 19 counties, and separate Election Day and nonprecinct voting results for five counties (with some overlap among the three categories).

| TABLE 4.10 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .2590398 | .2348617 | 1.10 | 0.274 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0153128 | .032703 | -0.47 | 0.641 | -.0849986 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0024908 | .0008625 | -2.89 | 0.005** | -.4574847 |
| Poverty rate | -.0011194 | .0039665 | -0.28 | 0.779 | -.0619323 |
| High school graduation rate | .0043515 | .0025259 | 1.72 | 0.090 | .2758214 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.06e-06 | 1.53e-06 | -1.35 | 0.183 | -.1865624 |
| Registered percentage VAP | .2193114 | .1696163 | 1.29 | 0.201 | .1825563 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .2355.
Adjusted R-squared .160.
Root MSE .0831216.

With respect to One Stop voting in 2008, only the white percentage of voting age population is significant, indicating (contrary to expectations) that election reform played no role in increasing nonprecinct voting. However, it should be noted that 32 counties are excluded from this analysis due to missing observations of partisan commission control or socioeconomic variables.

TABLE 4.11: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast absentee by mail in 2008 as the dependent variable. (n=68) [44]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0444529 | .0461962 | -0.96 | 0.340 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0021822 | .0104129 | -0.21 | 0.835 | -.0336574 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0001981 | .0003192 | 0.62 | 0.537 | .1011014 |
| Poverty rate | -.0006221 | .001318 | -0.47 | 0.639 | -.0956341 |
| High school graduation rate | .0008687 | .000546 | 1.59 | 0.117 | .152992 |
| Voters per One Stop site | 9.57e-07 | 6.83e-07 | 1.40 | 0.166 | .2403213 |
| Registered percentage VAP | .004886 | .0420087 | 0.12 | 0.908 | .011301 |

R-squared .1923.
Adjusted R-squared .1128.
Root MSE .03075.

[44] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Missing observations are the same as those described in Footnote 13, above.

No variables emerge as significant in this equation. This is likely an artifact of the decreasing percentage of North Carolina votes which are cast by mail, and the emergence in 2008 of One Stop voting as the most popular form of casting one's ballot in the state.

TABLE 4.12: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast One Stop in 2012 as the dependent variable. (n=100) [45]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0252916 | .2037673 | -0.12 | 0.901 | |
| White -.0013337 | .000707 | -1.89 | 0.062 | -.2333461 | |
| Turnout % VAP | .2566108 | .1552361 | 1.65 | 0.102 | .1601809 |
| Voters per site | -1.88e-07 | 1.02e-06 | -0.18 | 0.854 | -.0192156 |
| High school graduation rate | .0059624 | .0023351 | 2.55 | 0.012* | .312685 |
| Democratic commission | .0241251 | .0221078 | 1.09 | 0.278 | .1204946 |
| Poverty rate | .0013954 | .002664 | 0.52 | 0.602 | .0658238 |

* Sig. p < .05.
R-squared .1970.
Adjusted R-squared .145.
Standard error of the estimate .0930023.

In this equation, only the high school graduation rate emerges as significant, with a positive coefficient indicating higher use of One Stop voting in counties with higher average education levels. The other partisan, election and socioeconomic factors do not appear to significantly affect the use of One Stop voting in this election.

TABLE 4.13: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of vote cast by mail in 2012 as the dependent variable. (n=100) [46]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0394324 | .2030122 | 0.19 | 0.846 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0258659 | .0225827 | 1.15 | 0.255 | .1291889 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0014635 | .0007297 | -2.01 | 0.048 | -.2560708 |
| Poverty rate | .0007173 | .0030635 | 0.23 | 0.815 | .0338348 |

[45] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.
[46] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

| TABLE 4.13 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High school graduation rate | .0060861 | .0027047 | 2.25 | 0.027 | .3191693 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.94e-07 | 1.03e-06 | -0.28 | 0.777 | -.0299666 |
| Registered percentage VAP | .1111911 | .1439094 | 0.77 | 0.442 | .0837211 |

R-squared .1712.
Adjusted R-squared .118.
Root MSE .01766.

As was the case with mail voting in 2008, no variables emerge as significant in this equation, again most likely due to the declining frequency of mail balloting in North Carolina. As previously stated, absentee voting by mail reached its highest percentage in 2004, the first election in which restrictions on its use were lifted. The available data do not permit this study to conduct an analysis of its specific effects on participation in that year, and thus no conclusion can be drawn; however, it appears that mail balloting has significantly influenced participation in the subsequent elections.

This chapter has sought to explore the possibility of partisan implementation of election reform within counties. Partisanship has been defined by party control of the county commission, which determines the budget under which the nonpartisan county Board of Elections operates, including the extent to which the county is able to offer One Stop voting (and thus also same day registration). While Democratic commissions appear to be more willing to devote resources to facilitate One Stop voting, it does not seem that this consistently translates into increased participation. Thus Hypothesis One is supported. It does not appear, however, that partisan control of the commission significantly affects the use of nonprecinct voting in general or One Stop voting in particular. The tendency for Democratic-controlled counties to have relatively greater access to One Stop voting does not appear to substantively effect its use. Therefore, Hypothesis 1A is not supported. The effects of same day registration and One Stop voting

on registration, turnout of registered voters and voting age population, and the partisan effects of any observed changes produced by these reforms, will be the subjects of the coming chapters, as will the continued consideration of the question of whether structural barriers (in according with the institutional theory) or socioeconomic factors (race, education and poverty) are more responsible for nonvoting (in accordance with the behavioral theory).

# CHAPTER FIVE: PARTICIPATION EFFECTS OF ELECTION REFORM

The previous chapter discussed issues pertaining to the implementation of the various types of election reform, focusing on partisan differences in implementation and their possible effects on reform. This chapter will begin an examination of the effects of these reforms, beginning with the issues of voter registration and turnout. The work will consider registration of voting age population, turnout of VAP, and turnout of registered voters. If the reforms have had their intended effects, the rates of each of these should significantly increase in comparison to previous elections, and the institutional theory of participation would argue that this increase was due to the removal of structural barriers. The hypotheses stated previously are that the availability of same day registration will significantly increase voter registration; the availability of SDR and One Stop voting will significantly increase turnout of both registered voters and the voting age population as a whole; and that each of these effects will be greater in counties with Democratic-controlled commissions.

First, the analysis will present a bivariate correlation of the relevant registration and turnout variables with each other. Registration percentage of voting age population, turnout percentage of registered voters, and turnout percentage of voting age population are correlated for each year. Then, the three registration and turnout factors are correlated with each other for the entire six-election span. This is to examine the extent to which registration and turnout patterns may have changed over the time examined by this study,

which provides the background for a preliminary analysis of the effects of election reform on those forms of participation.

TABLE 5.1: Bivariate correlations among registration and turnout factors, 1992-2012.[47]

(1) Registered percentage of voting age population
(2) Turnout percentage of registered voters
(3) Turnout percentage of voting age population

| | (1) | Sig. | (2) | Sig. | (3) | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year 1992 (n=100) | -.346 | .000** | .293 | .000** | -.084 | .040* |
| Year 1996 (n=100) | -.264 | .000** | -.368 | .000** | -.422 | .000** |
| Year 2000 (n=100) | .069 | .093 | -.430 | .000** | -.253 | .000** |
| Year 2004 (n=100) | .109 | .007** | -.058 | .158 | .035 | .396 |
| Year 2008 (n=100) | .211 | .000** | .369 | .000** | .418 | .000** |
| Year 2012 (n=100) | .221 | .000** | .194 | .000** | .305 | .000** |
| Registered percentage of voting age population (n=600) | .011 | .795 | | | .731 | .000** |
| Turnout percentage of voting age population (n=600) | | | | | .668 | .000** |

* Sig. p < .05, ** sig. p < .01.

The registration percentage of voting age population has increased steadily and consistently over the period examined, with significant and negative correlations for the first two years, no significant correlation in 2000, and significant and increasingly positive correlations for the latter three years. This may be an indication that election reform has affected registration, which will be explored further in a multivariate analysis below. The largest observed change in the registered percentage of VAP occurred between 2004 and 2008, indicating that the introduction of same day registration in the latter year may have had a significant, positive effect on this statistic, with a lesser (though still positive) effect in 2012. Turnout of both registered voters and voting age population has been inconsistent throughout the period examined, perhaps due to differences in the relative competitiveness of the various elections in different years, with

[47] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

elections perceived as more competitive in North Carolina producing higher turnout. In 1992, there was a positive correlation with turnout percentage of registered voters, but a negative correlation with turnout percentage of voting age population; both were significant. Both correlations were negative and significant in 1996 and 2000; both were insignificant in 2004; and both were positive and significant in 2008 and 2012, with a stronger correlation in 2008. It appears that the introduction of universally available One Stop voting began the reversal of a decline among the VAP in general, but not among those who were already registered.

The next section of the analysis examines the relationship among registration, turnout and the socioeconomic variables which will be used as key socioeconomic variables throughout the study. In order to isolate the effects of election reform on political participation, it is necessary to control for the effects of external factors, such as a county's population characteristics, and thus to explore those effects in the preliminary analysis.

TABLE 5.2: Bivariate correlations among county population characteristics, registration, and turnout, 1992-2012.[48]

(1) Registered percentage of voting age population
(2) Turnout percentage of registered voters
(3) Turnout percentage of voting age population

| | (1) | Sig. | (2) | Sig. | (3) | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White percentage of voting age population | .367 | .000** | -.192 | .000** | .160 | .000** | 600 |
| High school graduation rate | .341 | .000** | .400 | .000** | .530 | .000** | 281 |
| Poverty level | .032 | .594 | -.013 | .827 | .010 | .861 | 281 |

[48] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. For both high school graduation rate and poverty level, data were unavailable for 1992, 1996 and 2004, and 19 observations were missing for 2008.

Voter registration is the first step in the voting process. If one does not register, by definition one does not vote. One would therefore expect a positive relationship between the percentage of those who are registered and the percentage of those who actually vote. As is seen in Table 5.2, two of the three important socioeconomic characteristics are significantly and positively correlated with registration and turnout: white percentage of VAP and high school graduation rate, with no significant correlation observed for poverty level and participation rates.

Registration and turnout are significantly correlated only with white percentage of voting age population, and with the education variable, but (surprisingly) not with the poverty level. The correlations for the education variable are consistently positive (as expected), with the strength increasing from registration percentage of VAP, to turnout percentage of registered voters, to turnout percentage of VAP. White percentage of VAP is positively correlated with both registration and turnout of VAP, but negatively correlated with turnout percentage of registered voters, an apparent inconsistency.

The next section of the analysis examines registration characteristics and turnout, in order to explore the differential participation rates among different racial and political groups within North Carolina. If different groups register and vote at different rates, it is likely that they will be differentially affected by the reforms being examined.

TABLE 5.3: Bivariate correlations among registration characteristics and registration percentage of voting age population, 1992-2012. (n = 600 for percentages of registered voters belonging to each group; n = 500 for registration change percentage in four years, for which 1992 is excluded.)[49]

| Registered percentage of voting age population | | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| Percentage of registered voters who are Democrats | -.299 | .000** |

[49] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

| TABLE 5.3 CONTINUED | | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| Percentage of registered voters who are Republicans | .108 | .008** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are unaffiliated/other | .493 | .000** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are white | .024 | .557 |
| Percentage of registered voters who are black | -.159 | .000** |
| Democratic registration change percentage in four years | .058 | .199 |
| Republican registration change percentage in four years | -.376 | .000** |
| Unaffiliated/other registration change percentage in four years | -.398 | .000** |
| White registration change percentage in four years | -.048 | .286 |
| Black registration change percentage in four years | .011 | .807 |
| Total registration change percentage in four years | .090 | .045* |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

These correlations appear to indicate that registration percentages are highest in counties with greater concentrations of unaffiliated voters or those registered with other parties, with a lower but still positive and significant correlation with the percentage who are registered Republicans, and a negative, significant correlation with the percentage who are Democrats. There is no significant correlation with the percentage of registered voters who are white, and a negative, significant correlation with the percentage who are black. This indicates lower levels of registration in more Democratic counties and (obviously with some overlap) in counties with higher proportions of nonwhite populations. Again, differential rates of participation among these groups may produce differential effects of election reform, which will be explored in the multivariate analyses to follow.

There are negative and significant correlations between the percentage of VAP who are registered and the percentage change in registration among total population, Republicans, and unaffiliated voters since the previous presidential election, which would actually indicate a decreasing trend in registration from one election to the next, even during the time when reforms were implemented to make registration more widely

available and more closely tied to the process of voting. This will be explored in the multivariate analyses. There are no significant correlations for the racial groups.

TABLE 5.4: Bivariate correlations among registration characteristics and turnout percentage of registered voters, 1992-2012. (n = 600 for percentages of registered voters belonging to each group; n = 500 for registration change percentage in four years, for which 1992 is excluded.)[50]

| | | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| Percentage of registered voters who are Democrats | -.175 | .000** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are Republicans | .149 | .000** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are unaffiliated/other | .163 | .000** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are white | .110 | .082* |
| Percentage of registered voters who are black | -.082 | .045* |
| Democratic registration change percentage in four years | -.204 | .000** |
| Republican registration change percentage in four years | -.457 | .000** |
| Unaffiliated/other registration change percentage in four years | -.416 | .000** |
| White registration change percentage in four years | -.246 | .000** |
| Black registration change percentage in four years | -.113 | .012* |
| Total registration change percentage in four years | -.337 | .000** |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

The correlation with turnout percentage of registered voters and the percentage of voters belonging to each group is weak and significant: positive for Republicans, unaffiliated and white voters, and negative for Democrats and black voters. Once registered, members of the first three groups are more likely to actually turn out than are members of the last two. This may portend that registration and voting reforms will affect these groups differently. There is a significant negative correlation for each group with the turnout percentage of registered voters and percentage of registration change since the previous presidential election; this indicates that, over the course of the five elections for which the data are available (1996-2012), the larger proportion of voting age population who were registered, the smaller the proportion of registered voters who actually turned

[50] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.

out. This would seem to be a preliminary indication that the process of voting, rather than the process of registration, produces a greater obstacle to participation.

TABLE 5.5: Bivariate correlations among registration characteristics and turnout percentage of voting age population, 1992-2012. (n = 600 for turnout percentage; n=500 for percentage change from previous election, for which 1992 is excluded.)[51]

| | | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| Percentage of registered voters who are Democrats | -.345 | .000** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are Republicans | .178 | .000** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are unaffiliated/other | .492 | .000** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are white | .082 | .007** |
| Percentage of registered voters who are black | -.163 | .000** |
| Democratic registration change percentage in four years | -.092 | .034* |
| Republican registration change percentage in four years | -.551 | .000** |
| Unaffiliated/other registration change percentage in four years | -.534 | .000** |
| White registration change percentage in four years | -.194 | .000** |
| Black registration change percentage in four years | -.069 | .126 |
| Total registration change percentage in four years | -.280 | .000** |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

The correlations between the percentage of registered voters who belong to each group and turnout percentage of VAP are equally or more significant than was observed for those groups with turnout percentage of registered voters. The sign is in the same direction and, with the exception of white voters, the correlation is stronger in each case than was observed with registered voters. This reinforces the observation stated above, that voting rather than registration appears to pose the greater obstacle to participation over the course of the five elections examined. This will be explored further in the multivariate regression analyses to follow within the present work.

The next section of the analysis examines the specific effects of same day registration in 2008 and 2012 on registration and turnout.

[51] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.

TABLE 5.6: Bivariate correlations among same day registration (2008-2012) and registration percentage of voting age population. (n=200)[52]

| | | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| Same day registration as percentage of total registration | -.110 | .120 |
| Percentage of Democrats who are same day registrants | -.130 | .064 |
| Percentage of Republicans who are same day registrants | -.242 | .001** |
| Percentage of unaffiliated/other who are same day registrants | -.151 | .003** |
| Percentage of white voters who are same day registrants | -.159 | .025* |
| Percentage of black voters who are same day registrants | -.116 | .100 |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

The net percentage change produced by same day registration does not have a significant correlation with registered percentage of VAP for any of the groups examined, while the percentages of Republicans, unaffiliated and white voters who are same day registrants have negative and significant correlations with it, which would seem to be a preliminary indication indicate that for these groups, SDR had its greatest effects in counties with lower pre-existing registration rates.

TABLE 5.7: Bivariate correlations among same day registration (2008-2012) and turnout percentage of registered voters. (n=200)

| Turnout percentage of registered voters | | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| Same day registration as percentage of total registration | .220 | .001** |
| Percentage of Democrats who are same day registrants | .217 | .002** |
| Percentage of Republicans who are same day registrants | .088 | .212 |
| Percentage of unaffiliated/other who are same day registrants | .241 | .001** |
| Percentage of white voters who are same day registrants | .187 | .008** |
| % of black voters who are same day registrants | .035 | .623 |

The opposite effect from that observed in the previous table is seen for turnout of most groups of registered voters (since same day registrants are, by definition, registered voters who turn out). A significant and positive correlation is seen with turnout of those registered with the percentages of Democrats, unaffiliated, and white voters who used

[52] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.

SDR, as well as the total percentage of voters who are same day registrants. No significant correlation is observed for Republican or black voters.

TABLE 5.8: Bivariate correlations among same day registration (2008-2012) and turnout percentage of voting age population. (n=200)[53]

| | | Sig. |
|---|---|---|
| Same day registration as percentage of total registration | .069 | .329 |
| Percentage of Democrats who are same day registrants | .043 | .546 |
| Percentage of Republicans who are same day registrants | -.128 | .071 |
| Percentage of unaffiliated/other who are same day registrants | .046 | .517 |
| Percentage of white voters who are same day registrants | -.001 | .994 |
| Percentage of black voters who are same day registrants | -.072 | .311 |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

No significant correlations were observed here. This, combined with the data observed in Table 5.7 above, would seem to indicate that SDR significantly increased turnout among those who wished to register, but that its availability did not affect overall turnout; it appears that those who did not vote were not, in fact, more likely to do so because of the removal of a registration barrier. This reinforces the observations made above that registration does not appear to be the most significant barrier to voting; nonparticipation must have another, more influential explanation. This will be explored by the multivariate analyses to follow.

The next section of the analysis examines the relationship among registration, turnout, and voting method:

TABLE 5.9: Bivariate correlations among registration percentage of voting age population and voting method, 1996-2012.[54]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast on Election Day | -.321 | .000** | 423 |

[53] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.

[54] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.

| TABLE 5.9 CONTINUED | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Republican vote cast on Election Day | -.315 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct | .324 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct | .315 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of vote cast on Election Day | -.270 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of vote cast nonprecinct | .280 | .000** | 423 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -.157 | .002** | 401 |

** Sig. p < .01.

Here are observed moderate and significant correlations for almost every factor involving choice of voting method. For Democratic and Republican voters, the registration percentage of voting age population varies according to the percentage of the vote cast by each method: it is negatively correlated with Election Day voting and positively correlated to an almost identical degree with nonprecinct voting. The ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites is also weakly and significantly correlated in the expected (negative) direction, giving a preliminary indication that the relative availability of One Stop voting (a prerequisite to the use of same day registration in 2008 and 2012) contributes to higher levels of voter registration.

TABLE 5.10: Bivariate correlations among turnout percentage of registered voters and voting method, 1996-2012.[55]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast on Election Day | -.653 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast on Election Day | -.635 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct | .652 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct | .619 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of vote cast on Election Day | -.653 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of vote cast nonprecinct | .655 | .000** | 423 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -.230 | .000** | 401 |

** Sig. p < .01.

[55] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.

TABLE 5.11: Bivariate correlations among turnout of voting age population and voting method, 1996-2012. [56]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast on Election Day | -.686 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast on Election Day | -.662 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct | .687 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct | .656 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of vote cast on Election Day | -.666 | .000** | 423 |
| Percentage of vote cast nonprecinct | .672 | .000** | 423 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -.256 | .000** | 401 |

** Sig. $p < .01$.

The correlations observed for registration of voting age population are even stronger with respect to the turnout of both registered voters and the voting age population as a whole. Strong and significant correlations are seen with respect to turnout and choice of voting method: positive for percentage of vote cast nonprecinct, negative for percentage of vote cast on Election Day. Again, the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites is negatively correlated with turnout. It appears, therefore, that the availability of nonprecinct voting has had a significant positive effect on voter registration and an even greater effect on voter turnout, and that this effect increases with greater relative availability of it. This will be explored in greater detail by multivariate analysis.

The next section of the analysis will utilize multivariate regression to examine the impact of each reform on registration and turnout, beginning with the percentage of voting age population which is registered. Ordinary Least Squares regression is used, with robust standard errors to correct for heteroskedasticity, and the Durbin-Watson technique used to test for autocorrelation. The first equation uses year dummy variables to explore variation over time, with 1992 as the baseline:

[56] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.

TABLE 5.12: Multivariate regression equation comparing change in registered percentage of voting age population over time, 1996-2012. (n=600; 1992 is the omitted variable.)[57]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .7520645 | .0101459 | 74.13 | 0.000 | . |
| Year 1996 | .0187242 | .0138453 | 1.35 | 0.135 | .0687059 |
| Year 2000 | .0942356 | .0137796 | 6.84 | 0.000** | .3457856 |
| Year 2004 | .1034214 | .0134338 | 7.70 | 0.000** | .3794917 |
| Year 2008 | .1266118 | .0125986 | 10.05 | 0.000** | .4645861 |
| Year 2012 | .1288304 | .0126526 | 10.18 | 0.000** | .4727269 |

R-squared .2497
Adjusted R-squared .243.
Root MSE .088.
** Sig. $p < .01$.

This regression equation indicates that registration has steadily increased since the baseline year of 1992, with significant increases in every year except 1996, and the greatest increases coming in 2008 and 2012, coincident with the availability of same day registration. Thus, it would appear that SDR has had an additive effect to the existing trend of increased registration over the time studied.

The next regression equation introduces variables representing Democratic control of the county commission, socioeconomic variables, the relative availability of One Stop voting, and the effect of same day registration in 2008 and 2012, using registered percentage of voting age population for the entire six-election period as the dependent variable:

TABLE 5.13: Multivariate regression equation using registered percentage of Voting Age Population as the dependent variable, 2008-2012. (n=172)[58]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0789764 | .1630645 | .048 | 0.629 | . |

[57] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and County Boards of Elections.
[58] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

| TABLE 5.13 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Democratic commission | .0355377 | .0133624 | 2.66 | 0.009** | .2334841 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0006123 | .0006572 | .093 | 0.353 | .1380954 |
| Poverty rate | .0050698 | .0020138 | 2.52 | 0.013* | .3270115 |
| High school graduation rate | .0082495 | .0013854 | 5.95 | 0.000** | .6062053 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -6.02e-07 | 4.64e-07 | -1.30 | 0.195 | -.0745323 |
| SDR percentage of registrants | -.4975105 | .4866234 | -1.02 | 0.308 | -.0842432 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared .2955.
Adjusted R-squared .2699.
Root MSE .06515.

Education emerges as the most significant and influential variable here, followed by party control of the county commission and poverty rate, all with positive coefficients. The racial composition of the county and the election reform factors do not emerge as significant. This would seem to indicate that the county's existing characteristics are more influential predictors of its rate of registration among voting age population than are election reforms designed to make it easier for its citizens to register and to vote.

The next section of the analysis examines the effect of same day registration on the size of the electorate, using as the dependent variable the percentage of registered voters who used SDR and the same demographic factors as in the previous equation as independent variables:

TABLE 5.14: Multivariate regression equation using percentage of registered voters who are same day registrants as the dependent variable, 2008-2012. (n=172)[59]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.0689841 | 0.0175589 | 3.93 | 0.000 | . |
| Democratic commission | -0.0005012 | 0.0020318 | -0.25 | 0.805 | -0.0194 |
| White percentage of VAP | -0.0005517 | 0.0000706 | -7.81 | 0.000** | -0.7348 |
| Poverty rate | -0.0009601 | 0.0002383 | -4.03 | 0.000** | -0.3657 |
| High school graduation rate | 0.0000797 | 0.0001666 | 0.48 | 0.633 | 0.03457 |
| Voters per One Stop site | 1.74E-07 | 9.37E-08 | 1.86 | 0.065 | 0.12716 |

** Sig. p < .01.

[59] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 5.14 CONTINUED
R-squared .3585.
Adjusted R-squared .3392.
Root MSE .1039.

In this equation, the white percentage of voting age population and the poverty rate are the only significant variables, with a negative coefficient in both cases. This would indicate that SDR was more widely used in (perhaps paradoxically) counties with higher proportions of minority populations, and wealthier counties. The relative availability of One Stop voting, which is synonymous with the availability of SDR, is not significant here. This again indicates that the county's existing characteristics, rather than election reform factors, are more influential in determining the use of Same Day Registration.

The next section of the analysis examines turnout percentage of registered voters over time, using year dummies:

TABLE 5-15: Multivariate regression equation comparing turnout percentage of registered voters over time, 1992-2012. (n=600; 1992 is the omitted category)[60]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .6766 | .0048819 | 138.56 | .000 | . |
| Year 1996 | -.1017 | .0071826 | -14.16 | .000** | -.5477453 |
| Year 2000 | -.1122 | .0073368 | -15.29 | .000** | -.6042972 |
| Year 2004 | -.0542 | .0073791 | -7.35 | .000** | -.2919154 |
| Year 2008 | .0114 | .0064247 | 1.77 | .077 | .0613992 |
| Year 2012 | -.0151 | .006622 | -2.28 | .023* | -.081327 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared .4844.
Adjusted R-squared .48.
Root MSE .04994.

[60] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

All years except 2008 are significant here, with negative coefficients. The substantially higher t values and Beta values in the earlier equations indicate a relatively lower turnout in comparison to the later elections. This appears to indicate significant decline in turnout among registered voters from the previous election in all years except 2008, where the coefficient is positive but not statistically significant. In comparison to the steady increase in turnout percentage among voting age population, it would seem that with the exception of 2008, there has been a proportionately smaller share of the registered population actually voting in each election. This might indicate that the introduction of SDR in 2008 temporarily arrested this decline, since same day registrants are by definition voters; but the gap returned in 2012, as same day registration decreased. This would also indicate that, in general, overcoming the registration hurdle may not be sufficient for many registrants to overcome the voting hurdle as well.

The next section of the analysis introduces variables related to county commission control, socioeconomic factors, and factors related to nonprecinct voting and same day registration.

TABLE 5.16: Multivariate regression equation using turnout percentage of registered voters as the dependent variable (2000, 2008, 2012), with socioeconomic and election reform factors as independent variables. (n=243)[61]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .7220874 | .0612795 | 11.78 | 0.000 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0110225 | .007628 | -1.44 | 0.150 | -.0784607 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0002693 | .0002758 | -0.98 | 0.330 | -.064353 |
| Poverty rate | -.0043239 | .0008509 | -5.08 | 0.000** | -.3054595 |
| High school graduation rate | -.001185 | .0006998 | -1.69 | 0.092 | -.1067037 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -3.47e-07 | 2.10e-07 | -1.65 | 0.100 | -.1104077 |

[61] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. 1992, 1996 and 2004 observations are omitted from the analysis due to the lack of data on the education and poverty variables.

| TABLE 5-16 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .2547899 | .0216755 | 11.75 | 0.000** | .7864404 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .5471.
Adjusted R-squared .5355.
Root MSE .4791.

Here it appears that election reform has had an impact. The percentage of vote cast nonprecinct is significant and the most influential variable, followed by the county's poverty rate. The ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites, the education and racial variables, and party control of the county commission do not emerge as significant variables. It thus appears that nonprecinct voting is an extremely strong predictor of turnout among registered voters.

The next section of the analysis will examine turnout of voting age population, over time and using the socioeconomic and political factors previously examined.

TABLE 5.17: Multivariate regression equation comparing turnout percentage of voting age population over time, 1992-2012. (n=600, with 1992 as the omitted category)[62]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .5089 | .0076909 | 66.17 | 0.000 | . |
| Year 1996 | -.0648 | .0101185 | 6.40 | 0.000** | -2827221 |
| Year 2000 | -.0328 | .0097201 | -3.37 | 0.001** | -.1431062 |
| Year 2004 | .0225 | .0099493 | 2.26 | 0.024* | .0981674 |
| Year 2008 | .0955 | .0096591 | 9.89 | 0.000** | .416666 |
| Year 2012 | .0742 | .0099286 | 7.47 | 0.000** | .3237342 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared .4321.
Adjusted R-squared .4273.
Root MSE .0647.

As was seen with registration rates, turnout has also increased steadily over the period examined by this study, with negative coefficients in 1996 and 2000 and positive

[62] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

coefficients thereafter. The greatest increase occurred in 2008, the year of Obama's first election and the first year in which One Stop voting surpassed Election Day voting. with a smaller but still significant increase in 2012.

TABLE 5.18: Multivariate regression equation using turnout percentage of voting age population as the dependent variable (2000, 2008, 2012), with socioeconomic and election reform factors as independent variables. (n=243)[63]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .2203366 | .0750171 | 2.94 | 0.004 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0066782 | .0092556 | 0.72 | 0.471 | .0414474 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0003337 | .0003488 | 0.96 | 0.340 | .069522 |
| Poverty rate | -.0008856 | .0011355 | -0.78 | 0.436 | -.0545509 |
| High school graduation rate | .0030392 | .0008386 | 3.62 | 0.000** | .2386185 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -4.60e-07 | 2.10e-07 | -2.19 | 0.030* | -.1277589 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .2009321 | .0227036 | 8.85 | 0.000** | .5407555 |

R-squared .5393.
Adjusted R-squared .5275.
Root MSE .05542.

The following equation examines turnout percentage of VAP in 2008 and 2012, with an added variable representing the effect of Same Day Registration in those years:

TABLE 5.19: Multivariate regression equation using turnout percentage of voting age population as the dependent variable (2008-2012), with socioeconomic and election reform factors including Same Day Registration as independent variables. (n=172)[64]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .2645182 | .1237205 | 2.14 | 0.034 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0181904 | .0110418 | 1.65 | 0.101 | .1436776 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0000569 | .0005149 | 0.11 | 0.912 | .015466 |
| Poverty rate | -.001005 | .0015781 | -0.64 | 0.525 | -.0779907 |
| High school graduation rate | .0032391 | .0012175 | 2.66 | 0.009** | .286682 |
| Voters per One Stop site | 7.84e-07 | 4.14e-07 | -1.89 | 0.060 | -.1170232 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .1371659 | .0509696 | 2.69 | 0.008** | .1942645 |

[63] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. 1992, 1996 and 2004 are excluded due to the lack of data on education and poverty for those years.

[64] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

| TABLE 5.19 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SDR percentage of registrants | .0554756 | .4710709 | 0.12 | 0.906 | .0113189 |

R-squared .1950.
Adjusted R-squared .1604.
Root MSE .05812.

The high school graduation rate and percentage of vote cast nonprecinct are significant in both equations, though their influence decreases substantially in the second. The ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites is significant in the first equation, but not in the second. The percentage of voters who used SDR in the second equation is not a significant variable, and its introduction into the model substantially lowers the R-squared value explaining the amount of variance in the dependent variable. This would indicate that SDR did not, in fact, substantially affect turnout among VAP.

In comparing the results of the equations examining turnout of registered voters and of voting age population, the percentage of the vote cast nonprecinct is the most influential variable in both cases, though more so with registered voters than with turnout of VAP as a whole. The socioeconomic variables also influence the equations, with the high school graduation rate significant in predicting turnout among VAP and the poverty level significant in predicting turnout among registered voters (but not vice versa). Party control of the county commission and the racial composition of the county are consistently insignificant.

In comparing the bivariate and multivariate models predicting registration and turnout, white percentage of voting age population was significant in the bivariate models but in none of the multivariate models, indicating that the bivariate significance may be a spurious relationship. Education was a significant predictor of registration and of turnout for both registered voters and voting age population in the bivariate model; in the

multivariate models, it influenced registration and turnout of VAP, but not turnout of registered voters. This would indicate that education does influence both registration and turnout; however, once one is registered, education does not predict likelihood of turnout.

The county's poverty rate was not significant in the bivariate models or in the multivariate models related to turnout of voting age population, but was significant in the multivariate models related to turnout of registered voters. This indicates that the addition of another independent variable in the multivariate model corrected for the error variance observed with poverty in the bivariate model. The significance of poverty in the registered voter turnout model indicates the opposite effect of education: poverty does not influence registration, but, once one is registered, poverty does predict likelihood of turnout. Democratic control of the county commission appears to positively affect overall registration rates, but not the use of SDR, and not turnout of either registered voters or VAP in general.

The next sections of the analysis will examine registration and turnout in the individual election years, in order to determine the effect which each reform may have had in the year in which it was introduced.

TABLE 5.20: Multivariate regression equations examining registration percentage of voting age population in individual election years, 1992-2012. [65]

| Year 1992 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.6138849 | 0.0475399 | 12.91 | .000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | 0.1783881 | 0.0606185 | 2.94 | .004** | 0.28422 |

** Sig. p < .01
R-squared .0808.
Adjusted R-squared .071.
Root MSE .09785.

[65] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and, where applicable, the U.S. Census Bureau. Data not included in individual equations were not available for those years.

TABLE 5.20 CONTINUED

| Year 1996 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.6377751 | 0.0408094 | 15.63 | .000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | 0.0017227 | 0.0005235 | 3.29 | .001** | .29855 |

** Sig. p < .01
R-squared .0891.
Adjusted R-squared .080.
Root MSE .09105.

| Year 2000 (n=71) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .1849816 | .217661 | 0.85 | 0.399 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | .0016431 | .0010877 | 1.51 | 0.136 | .30172 |
| Democratic commission | -.0105063 | .0247483 | 0.42 | 0.673 | -.0616262 |
| Poverty rate | .0080075 | .0039289 | 2.04 | 0.046* | .3742065 |
| High school graduation rate | .0054891 | .0018868 | 2.91 | 0.005** | .3926287 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.62e-07 | 3.15e-07 | -0.83 | 0.408 | -.1035647 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .1926194 | .1733678 | 1.11 | 0.271 | .1309252 |

* Sig. p. < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared 0.2078.
Adjusted R-squared 0.1335.
Root MSE .07971.

| Year 2004 (n=81) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .7196664 | .0753052 | 9.56 | 0.000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | .0015508 | .0007239 | 2.14 | 0.035* | .3162735 |
| Democratic commission | .0396466 | .0219518 | 1.81 | 0.075 | .2465469 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -9.78e-08 | 3.13e-07 | -0.31 | 0.755 | -0285684 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | -.0140829 | .075999 | -0.19 | 0.853 | -.0216271 |

* Sig. p < .05.
R-squared = 0.0638.
Adjusted R-squared .0145.
Root MSE = .08031.

| Year 2008 (n=68) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .056529 | .259417 | 0.22 | 0.828 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0521064 | .0200776 | 2.60 | 0.012* | .3474668 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0016255 | .0010565 | 1.54 | 0.129 | .3586528 |
| Poverty rate | .00455 | .0032895 | 1.38 | 0.172 | .3024095 |
| High school graduation rate | .006579 | .0023371 | 2.82 | 0.007** | .500972 |
| SDR percent of registrants | -1.050663 | .6809972 | -1.54 | 0.128 | -1670901 |
| One Stop percent of vote | .1426554 | .0929552 | 1.53 | 0.130 | .171377 |
| Mail percent of vote | .1423599 | .1480302 | 0.96 | 0.340 | .0615492 |
| Voters per One Stop site | 3.66e-07 | 7.22e-07 | 0.51 | 0.614 | .0397642 |

R-squared .3943.

TABLE 5.20 CONTINUED
Adjusted R-squared .3122.
Root MSE .06262.

| Year 2012 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.1312276 | .2181361 | -0.60 | 0.549 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0288899 | .0167377 | 1.73 | 0.088 | .1916373 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0000932 | .0007123 | 0.13 | 0.896 | .0216663 |
| Poverty rate | .0076959 | .0026207 | 2.94 | 0.004** | .4821431 |
| High school graduation rate | .0097185 | .0021085 | 4.61 | 0.000** | .6768907 |
| SDR percent of registrants | -1.0262 | .855912 | -1.20 | 0.234 | -.1475287 |
| One Stop percent of vote | .0964558 | .0606433 | 1.59 | 0.115 | .1281044 |
| Mail percent of vote | .8372363 | .2764007 | 3.03 | 0.003** | .2077792 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -4.76e-07 | 6.07e-07 | -0.78 | 0.435 | -.0644858 |

** Sig. $p < .01$.
R-squared .3913.
Adjusted R-squared .2942.
Root MSE .06363.

The white percentage of voting age population, the only datum available for all six elections examined, is significant with a positive coefficient in 1992, 1996, and 2004, but not in other years. It thus appears that the historically observed disparity between white and nonwhite rates of registration among VAP has recently diminished to a point of statistical insignificance. It does not appear, however, that registration reform is responsible for this change, as the percentage of registrants who used SDR was not a significant variable in predicting registration percentage of VAP in either 2008 or 2012. Democratic control of the county commission was significant, with a positive coefficient, in 2008, but not significant in other years. This may be an artifact of the Obama campaign's targeted voter registration efforts in more heavily Democratic areas.

The high school graduation rate is significant, with a positive coefficient, and the most influential variable in every year in which it appears, reflecting the historically

observed positive relationship between education and likelihood of political participation. It thus appears that the various election reforms examined herein have not narrowed the disparity in participation for the less well-educated. The poverty rate is significant, with a positive coefficient, in 2000 and 2012 (two of the three years for which the data were available). This leads to the unexpected conclusion that registration percentages were higher in those years in counties with higher levels of poverty.

The election reform variables were generally not significant. The ratio of voters per site, which might have been expected to affect registration rates in 2008 and 2012, does not achieve significance in any year. The percentage of vote cast nonprecinct in 2000 and 2004, the percentage cast One Stop in 2008 and 2012, and the percentage cast by mail in 2008 do not achieve significance. The percentage of vote cast by mail was significant with a positive coefficient in 2012, indicating that (since mail voters and same day registrants are mutually exclusive) registration levels were higher in counties with greater use of mail voting and lower use of One Stop and thus SDR. The percentage of registrants who used Same Day Registration does not achieve significance in either 2008 or 2012. If the use of Same Day Registration does not significantly increase the registration percentage of voting age population, then Hypothesis Two is not supported.

The next sections of the analysis will examine turnout of registered voters and turnout of voting age population in the individual election years.

TABLE 5.21: Multivariate regression equations examining turnout percentage of registered voters in individual election years, 1992-2012.[66]

| Year 1992 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.5554446 | 0.0230546 | 24.09 | .000 | . |

[66] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and, where applicable, the U.S. Census Bureau.

| TABLE 5.21 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White percentage of VAP | 0.1563699 | 0.0277383 | 5.64 | .000** | 0.51812 |
| ** Sig. p < .01. | | | | | |
| R-squared .2685 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .261. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .04198. | | | | | |

| Year 1996 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.4911895 | 0.0253781 | 19.35 | .000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | 0.0010832 | 0.0003127 | 3.46 | .001** | .33829 |
| ** Sig. p < .01. | | | | | |
| R-squared .1144 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .105. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .04982. | | | | | |

| Year 2000 (n=71) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .6236632 | .0960906 | 6.49 | 0.000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | .0002649 | .0004883 | 0.54 | 0.589 | .0726024 |
| Democratic commission | -.0077552 | .0149738 | -0.52 | 0.606 | -.0678912 |
| Poverty rate | -.0081068 | .0019362 | -4.19 | 0.000** | -.5654191 |
| High school graduation rate | .0011065 | .0009575 | 1.16 | 0.252 | .1181226 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -6.26e-07 | 1.94e-07 | -3.22 | 0.002** | -.3686031 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | -.1828038 | .1061943 | 1.72 | 0.090 | -.1854445 |
| ** Sig. p < .01. | | | | | |
| R-squared 0.4127. | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared 0.3577. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .04599. | | | | | |

| Year 2004 (n=81) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .5025964 | .035656 | 14.10 | 0.000 | |
| White percentage of VAP | .0014374 | .0003801 | 3.78 | 0.000** | .4454178 |
| Democratic commission | -.0027201 | .013651 | -0.20 | 0.843 | -.0257003 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.27e-07 | 2.12e-07 | -1.07 | 0.289 | -.1006325 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .0730603 | .0400745 | 1.82 | 0.072 | .1704715 |
| ** Sig. p < .01. | | | | | |
| R-squared 0.2673. | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared 0.2287. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .04676. | | | | | |

| Year 2008 (n=68) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .8342104 | .1108391 | 7.53 | 0.000 | |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0009754 | .0004726 | -2.06 | 0.043* | -.3944511 |
| Democratic commission | -.023437 | .011405 | -2.05 | 0.044* | -.2864416 |

| TABLE 5.21 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| High school graduation rate | -.0007402 | .0016939 | -0.44 | 0.664 | -.1033065 |
| Poverty rate | -.0047375 | .0017665 | -2.68 | 0.009** | -.5770832 |
| Voters per site | -9.56e-07 | 6.20e-07 | -1.54 | 0.129 | -.1903309 |
| One Stop percent of vote | .0253669 | .0580879 | 0.44 | 0.664 | .0558525 |
| Mail percent of vote | -.1379701 | .1056868 | -1.31 | 0.197 | -.109328 |
| Registered percentage VAP | .0983041 | .1246642 | 0.79 | 0.434 | .1801702 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.

| Year 2012 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .9739998 | .0888098 | 10.97 | 0.000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0004886 | .0003512 | -1.39 | 0.167 | -.1922719 |
| Democratic commission | -.0018185 | .0102841 | -0.18 | 0.860 | -.020426 |
| High school graduation rate | -.0033882 | .0016362 | -2.07 | 0.041* | -.3995916 |
| Poverty rate | -.0054881 | .0013492 | -4.07 | 0.000** | -.5822002 |
| Voters per site | -3.49e-07 | 4.62e-07 | -0.76 | 0.452 | -.0799744 |
| One Stop percent of vote | .0916366 | .04386 | 2.09 | 0.039* | .2060816 |
| Mail percent of vote | .1334602 | .1839946 | 0.73 | 0.470 | .0560842 |
| Registered percentage VAP | .0569931 | .0898645 | 0.63 | 0.528 | .0965066 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared 0.1652.
Adjusted R-squared .0918.
Root MSE .04263.

The white percentage of the county's VAP is significant with a positive coefficient in most of the earlier years, and actually significant with a negative coefficient in 2008. This would seem to indicate that, as previously observed, the registration gap between white and nonwhite voters has closed over time, so has the gap between the rates of white and nonwhite registrants who actually vote. The poverty rate was significant, with a negative coefficient, and the most influential variable in each year for which it was available, indicating lower rates of turnout among registered voters in counties with higher levels of poverty. The county's high school graduation rate was significant only in 2012, where it had an unexpectedly negative coefficient. The ratio of potential voters to

One Stop sites was significant only in 2000, the first year in which universal One Stop voting was offered. The use of nonprecinct voting in general was not significant in 2000 or 2004. For the two elections in which nonprecinct voting could be broken down by type, the percentage of mail voting was not significant, and the percentage of One Stop voting was significant, with a positive coefficient, only in 2012. Party control of the county commission was significant only in 2008, with a negative coefficient for Democratic control. It thus appears that election reform has had no consistent effect on the turnout of registered voters. Hypothesis Three is therefore generally not supported.

The next section of the analysis will examine turnout of voting age population in the individual elections being considered.

TABLE 5.22: Multivariate regression equations examining turnout percentage of voting age population in individual election years, 1992-2012.[67]

| Year 1992 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.3234356 | 0.031162 | 10.38 | .000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | 0.2393706 | 0.0394824 | 6.06 | .000** | 0.50356 |
| ** Sig. p < .01. | | | | | |
| R-squared .2536 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .246. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .06678. | | | | | |

| Year 1996 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0.3086404 | 0.0276709 | 11.15 | .000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | 0.0017529 | 0.0003481 | 5.04 | .000** | 0.43855 |
| ** Sig. p < .01. | | | | | |
| R-squared .1923 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .184. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .05939. | | | | | |

| Year 2000 (n=71) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .181469 | .095551 | 1.90 | 0.062 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | .0009814 | .0005539 | 1.77 | 0.081 | .2905635 |
| Democratic commission | -.0141785 | .0136391 | -1.04 | 0.302 | -.1340881 |

[67] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and, where applicable, the U.S. Census bureau.

| TABLE 5.22 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poverty rate | -.0027284 | .0017617 | -1.55 | 0.126 | -.2055749 |
| High school graduation rate | .0038641 | .0008659 | 4.46 | 0.000** | .4456341 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -6.32e-07 | 1.75e-07 | -3.61 | 0.001** | -.4021597 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | -.0318285 | .1067365 | -0.30 | 0.767 | -.0348806 |

R-squared .4815.
Adjusted R-squared .4329.
Root MSE .04.

| Year 2004 (n=81) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .3402783 | .0492739 | 6.91 | 0.000 | |
| White percentage of VAP | .0022362 | .0004733 | 4.72 | 0.000** | .6187363 |
| Democratic commission | .0236981 | .015671 | 1.51 | 0.135 | .1999367 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.31e-07 | 2.24e-07 | -1.03 | 0.305 | -.0915146 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .0523322 | .0471562 | 1.11 | 0.271 | .1090336 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared = 0.3075.
Adjusted R-squared .2710.
Root MSE = .05091.

| Year 2008 (n=68) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .1652691 | .1886871 | 0.88 | 0.385 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | .0003519 | .000801 | 0.44 | 0.662 | .0925633 |
| Democratic commission | .0178129 | .0183079 | 0.97 | 0.335 | .1416117 |
| Poverty rate | -.0004923 | .0023085 | -0.21 | 0.832 | -.0390117 |
| High school graduation rate | .0045876 | .001989 | 2.31 | 0.025* | .4164675 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -4.87e-07 | 7.74e-07 | -0.63 | 0.531 | -.0630686 |
| One Stop percent of vote | .129262 | .0798081 | 1.62 | 0.111 | .1851303 |
| Mail percent of vote | -.0184159 | .1318994 | -0.14 | 0.889- | .0094922 |
| SDR percent of registrants | -.8338791 | .679558 | -1.23 | 0.225- | .1581002 |

* Sig. p < .05.
R-squared = 0.2911
Adjusted R-squared .1950.
Root MSE = .05682.

| Year 2012 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) . | .1776717 | .177552 | 1.00 | 0.320 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0002362 | .0006057 | -0.39 | 0.697 | -.0662103 |
| Democratic commission | .0191116 | .0143119 | 1.34 | 0.185 | .1529185 |
| Poverty rate | .0008163 | .0022954 | 0.36 | 0.723 | .0616891 |
| High school graduation rate | .0038789 | .0019368 | 2.00 | 0.048* | .3258749 |
| Voters per site | -6.45e-07 | 5.06e-07 | -1.28 | 0.205 | -.1053477 |
| One Stop percent of vote | .1278335 | .0606076 | 2.11 | 0.038* | .2047901 |
| Mail percent of vote | .6756699 | .219661 | 3.08 | 0.003** | .2022634 |

| TABLE 5.22 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SDR % of registrants | -.0802892 | .9034707 | -0.09 | 0.929 | -.0139229 |

R-squared .2015.
Adjusted R-squared .1407.
Root MSE .05821.

The white percentage of the county's voting age population is significant with a positive coefficient in most earlier elections, but not in more recent ones, indicating a closing of the gap in voting rates among white and nonwhite VAP. The education variable remains significant with a positive coefficient in each election where it is included, indicating the previously noted relationship between education and voting, while the poverty variable is not significant in any equation. As was true of turnout of registered voters, the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites was significant (with the expected negative coefficient) only in 2000, the first year in which One Stop voting was universally available. The percentage of vote cast nonprecinct is not significant until 2012, when both One Stop and mail are significant with positive coefficients, indicating that the availability of both options contributes to turnout of VAP. The percentage of registrants who used SDR is insignificant in both 2008 and 2012. Democratic control of the county commission is not significant in any equation.

In comparing the findings for turnout of registered voters and of voting age population, it appears that the racial gap has narrowed among both groups. The poverty variable is significant in predicting turnout of registered voters but not of voting age population, while the education variable is significant with respect to turnout of voting age population but, with one exception, not significant with respect to turnout of registered voters. Party control of the commission was significant on only one occasion, and its sign was in the unexpected direction. One Stop voting was significant for both

groups in 2012, while mail voting was significant for turnout of VAP in that year. Otherwise, with the exception of the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites in 2000, the availability of nonprecinct voting does not appear to significantly affect turnout. The hypotheses previously stated with respect to the effect of same day registration on registration and turnout were that the availability of SDR would significantly increase voter registration, increase turnout of both registered voters and the voting age population as a whole. The hypotheses previously stated with respect to the effects of greater availability of nonprecinct voting through One Stop and absentee voting were also that these practices would significantly increase voter turnout. This does not appear to have been the case. Hypotheses Three and Four are therefore not supported.

This chapter has examined the effects of election reform on voter registration and turnout in general. The partisan effects of these reforms, and the extent to which different partisan groups are differentially affected by them, will be addressed by the remainder of the present work.

# CHAPTER SIX: PARTISAN DIFFERENCES IN CHOICE OF VOTING METHOD

The preceding chapters have examined the differences in partisan implementation of election reform, and the effects which election reform has had on participation in the form of registration and turnout. The following chapter will examine the partisan effects of these reforms – whether the changes in the voting electorate produced by the increased availability of registration and nonprecinct voting have actually affected the results of presidential elections in North Carolina. The present chapter will examine whether Democratic and Republican voters differ in their choices of voting methods: Is one group more likely than the other to take advantage of nonprecinct voting in general, One Stop voting, or of unrestricted absentee voting by mail? This chapter will examine nonprecinct voting in general for the entire span of the five elections examined, and One Stop and mail voting for the elections of 2008-2012, for which distinct data could be obtained on the use of these methods. The socioeconomic variables which have been previously used in this analysis will continue to be utilized here. The first analysis in this chapter is a set of bivariate correlations using the percentage of each candidate's vote which is cast by each method as a variable.

TABLE 6.1: Bivariate correlation between voting method and population characteristics in nonprecinct voting, 1996-2012. [68]

(1) Percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct
(2) Percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct

| | (1) | Sig. | N | (2) | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

[68] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.

TABLE 6.1 CONTINUED

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year 1996 | -.390 | .000** | 27[69] | -.395 | .000** | 27 |
| Year 2000 | -.581 | .000** | 100 | -.562 | .000** | 100 |
| Year 2004 | -.240 | .000** | 99[70] | -.186 | .000** | 99 |
| Year 2008 | .550 | .000** | 95[71] | .466 | .000** | 95 |
| Year 2012 | .496 | .000** | 100 | .510 | .000** | 100 |
| Democratic commission | .060 | .276 | 333[72] | .018 | .740 | 333 |
| High school graduation rate | .504 | .000** | 280[73] | .538 | .000** | 280 |
| Poverty rate | .261 | .000** | 280 | 197 | .000** | 280 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -.350 | .000** | 399[74] | -.324 | .000** | 399 |
| White percentage of voting age population | -.015 | .754 | 425 | .031 | .529 | 425 |
| Registered percentage of voting age population | .324 | .000** | 425 | .315 | .000** | 425 |
| Turnout percentage of registered voters | .652 | .000** | 425 | .619 | .000** | 425 |
| Turnout percentage of voting age population | .687 | .000** | 425 | .656 | .000** | 425 |
| Democratic percentage of vote | .137 | .005** | 425 | .075 | .124 | 425 |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

Over the five elections for which the data are available, the share of both parties' votes which is cast nonprecinct increases over time, with significant correlations throughout. The stronger negative correlation in both cases between the year 2000 (the first year of universal One Stop voting) and the percentage of the vote cast nonprecinct, than is observed for the preceding year 1996, is likely due to the considerably larger sample size of 100 counties in the latter year as opposed to only 27 in the former. As has been previously discussed in this work, only 27 counties reported votes by method

[69] The remaining 73 counties did not report vote by method prior to 2000.

[70] Lee County did not report Election Day and nonprecinct voting separately in 2004.

[71] Chatham, Duplin, Lee, and Northampton Counties did not report Election Day and nonprecinct voting separately in 2008.

[72] Data on partisan control of the county commission are not available for 1992 or 1996, and there are missing observations for 2000, 2004 and 2008.

[73] Education and poverty data are not available for 1992, 1996 or 2004, nor for certain counties in 2008.

[74] The number of One Stop sites in Columbus County in 2000 could not be determined from the available data.

(Election Day or absentee) in 1996, whereas all 100 generally did so (with exceptions as noted) beginning in 2000. The negative correlation becomes weaker in both cases in 2004, and positive, moderate significant correlations are observed for both parties in 2008 and 2012, with a stronger correlation for the Democratic nonprecinct vote share in 2008 and for the Republican in 2012. Party control of the county commission does not produce a significant difference in the use of nonprecinct voting in general over the five elections examined, though differences will be observed in the separate examination (below) of One Stop and mail voting in 2008 and 2012.

The county's high school graduation rate is positively, moderately and significantly correlated with nonprecinct voting for both parties, while the poverty rate has a weak, positive significant correlation in both cases. This leads to the seemingly disparate conclusions that nonprecinct voting is more common in both better-educated and poorer counties (though these conclusions are subject to the limitations imposed by the lack of data for 1996 and 2004). The effect of education is slightly greater for the nonprecinct share of the Republican vote, while the effect of poverty is slightly greater in the Democratic case.

As expected, the ratio of potential voters to One Stop site, a proxy for the relative availability of One Stop voting, has a moderate, significant and negative correlation with the use of nonprecinct voting, indicating that it is more likely to be used where it is more readily available. The white percentage of the county's voting age population is not significantly correlated with either party's nonprecinct vote share. The registration and turnout statistics are all positively and significantly correlated with nonprecinct voting in both cases, indicating that the availability of nonprecinct voting has a positive effect on

registration and an even stronger positive effect on turnout of both registered voters and the voting age population in general. The effect is slightly stronger in all cases for the nonprecinct share of Democratic vote than for the Republican. The percentage of the Democratic vote cast nonprecinct is significantly and positively correlated with the Democratic candidate's share of the vote, while there is no significant correlation with Republican use of nonprecinct voting and Democratic vote share. This would indicate that nonprecinct voters have become a larger share of the Democratic voting coalition, while no such effect has been observed for Republicans.

The next section of the analysis specifically examines the use of One Stop voting in 2008 and 2012.

TABLE 6.2: Bivariate correlations with percentage of vote for each candidate cast One Stop, 2008-2012.[75]

| | (1) Percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop | | | (2) Percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sig. | N | | Sig. | N |
| Democratic commission | .242 | .001** | 177 | .056 | .459 | 177 |
| High school graduation rate | .178 | .018* | 177 | .243 | .001** | 177 |
| Poverty rate | .057 | .450 | 177 | -.066 | .382 | 177 |
| Voters per One Stop site | .017 | .812 | 196 | -.023 | .309 | 196 |
| White percentage of voting age population | -.288 | .000** | 196 | .014 | .841 | 196 |
| Registered percentage of voting age population | .199 | .005** | 196 | .155 | .031* | 196 |
| Turnout percentage of registered voters | .181 | .000** | 196 | .104 | .147 | 196 |
| Turnout percentage of voting age population | .281 | .000** | 196 | .192 | .007** | 196 |
| SDR percentage of Democratic registrants | .359 | .000** | 196 | .058 | .416 | 196 |
| SDR percentage of Republican registrants | .332 | .000** | 196 | .141 | .049* | 196 |
| Democratic percentage of vote | .438 | .000** | 196 | .095 | .186 | 196 |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

[75] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.

Democratic control of the county commission is significantly and positively correlated with the percentage of the Democratic vote which is cast One Stop, but not with the Republican percentage. Given the previously observed correlation between Democratic commission control and a relatively lower ratio of voters to One Stop sites, it appears that Democratic-controlled counties are more likely to see an increase in the percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop due to the greater relative availability of this voting option in those counties, while Republican use of One Stop does not vary with partisan commission control. The high school graduation rate is significantly and positively correlated with the use of One Stop voting for both parties' candidates, indicating (as was seen above with regard to the use of nonprecinct voting in general) that counties with higher education levels also have higher levels of One Stop voting. The white percentage of the county's voting age population was negatively and significantly correlated with the One Stop share of the Democratic vote, while no significant correlation was observed on the Republican side. This would appear to indicate that One Stop voting for Democrats is more widely used in counties with higher percentages of minority population, while the use of One Stop voting for Republicans does not vary according to this characteristics. While the poverty rate and ratio of voters to One Stop site were significant in the five-election study of nonprecinct voting in general, neither reaches significance here.

While the general use of nonprecinct voting was significantly and positively correlated with all of the registration and turnout variables used in the previous equation, and those correlations continue to be significant (but weaker) for all categories on the Democratic side with respect to One Stop voting, there was no significant correlation

between the turnout percentage of registered voters and the One Stop share of vote for the Republican candidate. There were, however, weak, significant and positive correlations between both registration and turnout of voting age population and One Stop share for the Republican.

The Democratic candidate's share of the vote was significantly, positively correlated with the use of One Stop voting, and the correlation was stronger than that which was observed in the five-election study of general nonprecinct voting. Again, there was no significant correlation observed between the Democratic vote share and the proportion of Republican vote cast One Stop. This seems to indicate the particular importance of One Stop voting to the Obama campaigns of 2008 and 2012.

A significant positive correlation between One Stop voting and Same Day Registration is to be expected, because same day registrants are, by definition, One Stop voters. However, the partisan effects are of interest here. The Democratic percentage of the vote which was cast One Stop was moderately, significantly and positively correlated with the percentages of both Democrats and Republicans who used Same Day Registration. There was a weak, significant, positive correlation between the percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop and the percentage of Republicans who were same day registrants, and no significant correlation with the percentage of Democrats who used SDR. This indicates heavier Democratic use of One Stop voting in the presence of greater same day registration by either partisan group, but less effect of SDR on Republican use of One Stop voting, which would appear to lead to the conclusion that a greater share of Democratic voters in 2008 and 2012 were same day registrants than was true of their Republican counterparts.

TABLE 6.3: Bivariate correlations with percentage of vote for each candidate cast Absentee by Mail, 2008-2012.[76]

(1) Percentage of Democratic vote cast by mail
(2) Percentage of Republican vote cast by mail

| | | Sig. | N | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Democratic commission | -.080 | .289 | 177 | -.311 | .000** | 177 |
| High school graduation rate | .218 | .004** | 177 | .068 | .372 | 177 |
| Poverty rate | -.225 | .003** | 177 | -.084 | .264 | 177 |
| Voters per One Stop site | .017 | .812 | 196 | -.023 | .747 | 196 |
| White percentage of voting age population | .202 | .005** | 196 | .099 | .167 | 196 |
| Registered percentage of voting age population | .202 | .005** | 196 | .045 | .532 | 196 |
| Turnout percentage of registered voters | -.041 | . 566 | 196 | .116 | .104 | 196 |
| Turnout percentage of voting age population | .136 | .058 | 196 | .112 | .119 | 196 |
| Democratic percentage of vote | -.051 | .476 | 196 | -.052 | .472 | 196 |
| SDR percentage of Democratic registrants | .057 | .425 | 196 | .178 | .013* | 196 |
| SDR percentage of Republican registrants | -.123 | .085 | 196 | .067 | .351 | 196 |

Several differences emerge here between partisan use of One Stop and of mail voting. Democratic commission control was significant for Democratic, but not Republican, use of One Stop voting; the opposite is true for mail voting, with a significant and negative correlation between Democratic control and Republican use of mail voting. Unlike One Stop voting, there is no partisan consideration involved in the availability of absentee voting by mail (such as the decisions related to the number and location of sites). Given the lack of a correlation on the Republican side with frequency of One Stop voting in these counties, the conclusion to be drawn is that Republican voters in Democratic counties are more likely to vote on the traditional Election Day. This is the only significant correlation observed with respect to the Republican use of mail voting, while the Democratic rate of mail voting is significantly affected by a number of factors,

[76] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.

many of which were also significant with respect to the use of One Stop voting by these partisans. The high school graduation rate is positively correlated with Democratic mail voting, as it was with One Stop voting and with nonprecinct voting in general. The poverty rate is significantly and negatively correlated with Democratic mail voting, while it was not significantly correlated with Democratic use of One Stop voting, and was positively and significantly correlated with Democratic use of nonprecinct voting over the five-election period. The county's white percentage of voting age population is significantly and positively correlated with Democratic use of mail voting, while it was significantly and negatively correlated with Democratic use of One Stop voting and not significantly correlated with Democratic nonprecinct voting overall. This would indicate that Democratic partisans are more likely to use mail voting, and less likely to use One Stop, in counties with greater proportions of white voters. The registered percentage of voting age population is significantly and positively correlated with Democratic use of mail voting, as it was with Democratic use of One Stop voting and nonprecinct voting in general, while Democratic use of mail voting was not significantly correlated with turnout or with the overall Democratic percentage of the vote. Partisan control of the county commission, and the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites, were not significantly correlated with the Democratic use of voting by mail.

Mail voters are, by definition, not same day registrants. Any correlation observed between mail voting and SDR would presumably be negative. However, there is a weak, significant, positive correlation between the percentage of Democrats using SDR and the percentage of Republicans voting by mail. This indicates a greater disparity in choice of voting methods between the two groups in counties with greater Democratic use of SDR.

The next section of the analysis will use multivariate regression to explore the differences in Democratic and Republican choices of voting method.

TABLE 6.4: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct as the dependent variable with year dummies, 2000-2012. (n=425, with 1992 as the omitted category)[77]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .035537 | .0043303 | 8.21 | 0.000 | . |
| Year 2000 | .109698 | .0075099 | 14.61 | 0.000** | .190588 |
| Year 2004 | .259180 | .011845 | 21.88 | 0.000** | .4487283 |
| Year 2008 | .609252 | .0110368 | 59.42 | 0.000** | 1.054821 |
| Year 2012 | .583774 | .0043303 | 52.89 | 0.000** | 1.014242 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .8651
Adjusted R-squared .864.
Root MSE .09021.

TABLE 6.5: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct as the dependent variable with year dummies, 2000-2012. (n=425, with 1992 as the omitted category)[78]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .039704 | .006845 | 5.80 | 0.000 | . |
| Year 2000 | .104306 | .0093814 | 11.12 | 0.000** | .2140423 |
| Year 2004 | .243978 | .0131889 | 18.50 | 0.000** | .4989128 |
| Year 2008 | .4886185 | .0137835 | 35.45 | 0.000** | .99918 |
| Year 2012 | .5040033 | .0118677 | 42.47 | 0.000** | 1.034243 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .7805.
Adjusted R-squared .778.
Root MSE .097425.

Here, as with the bivariate correlations, is observed substantial growth in the portion of vote cast nonprecinct for both parties' candidates over the period observed. (The year 1996 was omitted from the equation due to collinearity.) Democratic

[77] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

[78] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

nonprecinct voting peaked in 2008, while Republican nonprecinct voting continued to increase through 2012. Each year's growth is statistically significant.

TABLE 6.6: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct (2000, 2008, 2012) as the dependent variable with socioeconomic and election reform factors as independent variables. (n=279)[79]

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -1.319373 | .178483 | -7.39 | 0.000 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0599842 | .0234235 | -2.56 | 0.011* | -.1258487 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0011461 | .0007841 | -1.46 | 0.145 | -.0807176 |
| Poverty rate | .0159323 | .0029599 | 5.38 | 0.000** | .3317417 |
| High school graduation rate | .0129741 | .0020548 | 6.31 | 0.000** | .3443424 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.23e-06 | 5.45e-07 | -4.10 | 0.000** | -.2093831 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | 1.265718 | .1569356 | 8.07 | 0.000** | .4278683 |
| R-squared .6562 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .647 | | | | | |
| Root MSE .1256017 | | | | | |

With the exception of the white percentage of the county's voting age population, all of the socioeconomic and election reform variables are significant here. Turnout percentage of voting age population is the strongest factor, indicating that greater turnout is associated with greater use of nonprecinct voting. (The same conclusion was reached by the equations in Chapter 5, when nonprecinct voting was a significant variable in determining turnout rates of both registered voters and voting age population in general.) The education and poverty variables are both significant with positive coefficients, indicating (as was found earlier) a seemingly paradoxical finding that Democratic nonprecinct voting is more likely in counties with both higher education levels and higher poverty levels. The ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites was also significant, indicating that the relatively greater availability of One Stop voting does in fact contribute to the percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct. However, the

[79] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election. In an equation using registration percentage of VAP instead of turnout percentage, registration percentage was not significant.

Democratic commission variable has a negative coefficient which indicates that One Stop voting is less likely in these counties.

TABLE 6.7: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct (2000, 2008, 2012) as the dependent variable with socioeconomic and election reform factors as independent variables. (n=279)[80]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -1.30765 | .1564843 | -8.36 | 0.000 | |
| Democratic commission | -.0469985 | .0207326 | -2.27 | 0.024* | -.1178305 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0006277 | .0006902 | 0.91 | 0.364 | .0528271 |
| Poverty rate | .0138785 | .0026467 | 5.24 | 0.000** | .3453223 |
| High school graduation rate | .0132289 | .0016372 | 8.08 | 0.000** | .4195638 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -1.86e-06 | 4.57e-07 | -4.06 | 0.000** | -.2082766 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .8703353 | .1299502 | 6.70 | 0.000** | .3515778 |

R-squared .6170.
Adjusted R-squared .6072.
Root MSE .1251.

The same variables emerge as significant, and as insignificant, in both equations, although the education variable is more influential for Republican voters while turnout was more influential for Democrats. This equation also presents the seeming paradox of greater levels of nonprecinct voting in both better-educated and poorer counties. The ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites had almost identically influential effects on Democratic and Republican voters, indicating that there is almost no partisan difference in voting patterns which results from the relatively greater availability of One Stop voting, and party control of the commission produces similar effects for both groups as well, indicating that nonprecinct voting for both parties was less widely used in Democratic-controlled counties.

[80] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

The next section of the analysis will focus specifically on the elections of 2008 and 2012, where the data allow for One Stop voting and absentee voting by mail to be differentiated.

TABLE 6.8: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop (2008-2012) as the dependent variable. (n=177)[81]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .3143101 | .146107 | 2.15 | 0.033 | |
| Democratic commission | .0023243 | .0169829 | 0.14 | 0.891 | .011923 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0024445 | .0005674 | -4.31 | 0.000** | -.4295912 |
| Poverty rate | -.0011509 | .0020995 | -0.55 | 0.584 | -.0581077 |
| High school graduation rate | .0039313 | .0015352 | 2.56 | 0.011* | .2199852 |
| Voters per site | -2.13e-07 | 8.07e-07 | -0.26 | 0.792 | -.0206141 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .3090712 | .1130953 | 2.73 | 0.007** | .200582 |

R-squared 0.2370.
Adjusted R-squared .2086.
Root MSE .08695.

In this equation, socioeconomic factors are more influential than election reform factors. The white percentage of the county's voting age population is most significant and most influential with a negative coefficient, adding further evidence that Democratic use of One Stop voting has been most common in counties with larger proportions of minority populations. As previously observed, the high school graduation rate and turnout rate of voting age population are both significant with positive coefficients, indicating that counties with higher education levels see greater use of One Stop voting among Democratic voters, and that rates of turnout and nonprecinct voting are positively associated with each other. The poverty rate and the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites did not significantly influence the proportion of Democratic vote cast One Stop (surprisingly, in the latter case).

[81] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 6.9: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop (2008-2012) as the dependent variable. (n=177)[82]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0154655 | .1516974 | -0.10 | 0.919 | . |
| Democratic commission | .006257 | .0191516 | 0.33 | 0.744 | .0315834 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0000771 | .0005679 | 0.14 | 0.892 | .0133382 |
| Poverty rate | .0010581 | .0022569 | 0.47 | 0.640 | .0525703 |
| High school graduation rate | .0050724 | .0016556 | 3.06 | 0.003** | .2793044 |
| Voters per site | -1.09e-06 | 9.18e-07 | -1.19 | 0.237 | -.1038188 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .1427444 | .1252802 | 1.14 | 0.256 | .0911587 |

R-squared .0915.
Adjusted R-squared .0576.
Root MSE .09642.

Here it is observed that Republican voters' use of One Stop is much less responsive to election reform and socioeconomic factors than is true of their Democratic counterparts. Only the high school graduation rate was a significant variable in this equation, indicating a higher proportion of One Stop voting by Republicans in counties with higher education levels, which was also true of Democrats. However, racial and turnout factors were not significant for Republican voters as was the case for Democrats. Poverty and the relative availability of One Stop sites failed to achieve significance in this equation as well. The substantially lower R-squared observed in the Republican equation as opposed to the Democratic one also provides evidence that Republicans' use of One Stop voting is far less susceptible than Democrats' to variation caused by the factors being examined.

The next section of the analysis explores possible differences in the use of absentee voting by mail by Democratic and Republican voters in the elections of 2008 and 2012.

[82] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

TABLE 6.10: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast absentee by mail (2008-2012) as the dependent variable. (n=177)[83]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0343987 | .0296664 | -1.16 | 0.248 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0022278 | .0073576 | 0.30 | 0.762 | .0360638 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0001339 | .0002048 | 0.65 | 0.514 | .074277 |
| Poverty rate | -.0006694 | .0007874 | -0.85 | 0.396 | -.1066684 |
| High school graduation rate | .0005234 | .0004128 | 1.27 | 0.207 | .0924294 |
| Voters per site | 1.47e-07 | 3.19e-07 | 0.46 | 0.647 | .0447508 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .0398233 | .0275277 | 1.45 | 0.150 | .0815607 |

R-squared .0959.
Adjusted R-squared .0564.
Root MSE .03009.

It has been established that absentee voting by mail now comprises a substantially smaller proportion of nonprecinct voting in North Carolina than does One Stop voting. Here, Democratic use of mail voting is not significantly affected by any of the election reform or socioeconomic factors which have been included in the analyses presented herein. No variables emerge as significant, and the R-squared explains a very small proportion of the variance.

TABLE 6.11: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast absentee by mail (2008-2012) as the dependent variable. (n=177)[84]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0299544 | .0322359 | 0.93 | 0.354 | |
| Democratic commission | -.0096045 | .003991 | -2.41 | 0.017* | -.222557 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0000367 | .000161 | -0.23 | 0.820 | -.0291743 |
| Poverty rate | -.0008782 | .0003469 | -2.53 | 0.012* | -.2002945 |
| High school graduation rate | .0001441 | .0003709 | 0.39 | 0.698 | .0364229 |
| Voters per site | 2.93e-07 | 1.64e-07 | 1.79 | 0.076 | .1280216 |

[83] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

[84] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

| TABLE 6.11 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .0497856 | .0268341 | 1.86 | 0.065 | .1459538 |

R-squared .2289.
Adjusted R-squared .1951.
Root MSE .01941.

In this equation as well, most of the election reform and socioeconomic variables which have been considered in the analysis do not achieve significance here. However, Democratic control of the commission and the county's poverty rate are both significant with negative coefficients, indicating that Republican use of mail voting occurs in lower rates in Democratic-controlled and poorer counties.

The next section of the analysis will examine differences in Democratic and Republican voting methods in individual elections, beginning in 2000.

TABLE 6.12: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct in 2000 as the dependent variable. (n=71)[85]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.1151839 | .127253 | -0.91 | 0.369 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0228854 | .0173342 | 1.32 | 0.191 | .1989129 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0012966 | .0006978 | 1.86 | 0.068 | .3528032 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .0941106 | .1890869 | 0.50 | 0.620 | .0864936 |
| Poverty rate | .0032923 | .0026566 | 1.24 | 0.220 | .2279832 |
| High school graduation rate | .000961 | .0016293 | 0.59 | 0.557 | .1018611 |
| Voters per site | -3.02e-07 | 2.66e-07 | -1.14 | 0.261 | -.1767076 |

R-squared 0.1372.
Adjusted R-squared 0.0563.
Root MSE .05614.

No variables emerge as significant in this equation, as was seen previously in the equation examining overall nonprecinct voting in this election year.

[85] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Missing observations are due to a lack of data on party control of 27 county commissions, and on the number of One Stop sites in Columbus County.

TABLE 6.13: Multivariate regression analysis using the percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct in 2000 as the dependent variable. (n=71)[86]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.2504524 | .1104636 | -2.27 | 0.027 | . |
| Democratic commission | .01863 | .0174386 | 1.07 | 0.289 | .1600104 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0012319 | .0005372 | 2.29 | 0.025* | .3312343 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | -.0592008 | .1903607 | -0.31 | 0.757 | -.0537655 |
| Poverty rate | .0017196 | .0022859 | 0.75 | 0.455 | .1176697 |
| High school graduation rate | .0040895 | .0016148 | 2.53 | 0.014* | .4283329 |
| Voters per site | 3.02e-07 | 2.78e-07 | -1.09 | 0.281 | -.1746587 |

* Sig. p < .05.
R-squared .1978.
Adjusted R-squared .1226.
Root MSE .05478.

The high school graduation rate and white percentage of the county's voting age population emerge as significant predictors of the proportion of Republican vote cast nonprecinct, both with positive coefficients. It would seem, therefore, that in this election year, nonprecinct voting was more commonly used among Republicans, and in counties with higher levels of education and white population.

The next section of the analysis examines voting patterns in the election of 2004, for which year data on education and poverty were not available.

TABLE 6.14: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast nonprecinct in 2004 as the dependent variable. (n=81)[87]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0085309 | .1474058 | -0.06 | 0.954 | . |
| Democratic commission | .034084 | .0424478 | 0.80 | 0.425 | .1580225 |

[86] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Missing observations are identical to those specified in Footnote 85, above.

[87] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections. Missing observations are due to a lack of data on party control of 18 county commissions, and separate Election Day and nonprecinct voting totals were not reported by Lee County.

| TABLE 6.14 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White percentage of VAP | .001248 | .0012757 | 0.98 | 0.331 | .1897566 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .413778 | .1911322 | 2.16 | 0.034* | .2273826 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -8.34e-07 | 5.38e-07 | -1.55 | 0.125 | -.1816856 |
| * Sig. p < .05. | | | | | |
| R-squared .1633 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared . 1192 | | | | | |
| Root MSE .10183 | | | | | |

TABLE 6.15: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast nonprecinct in 2004 as the dependent variable.[88]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .1157781 | .1455332 | 0.80 | 0.429 | |
| Democratic commission | .0205577 | .0425366 | 0.48 | 0.630 | .0891163 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0007285 | .001421 | -0.51 | 0.610 | -.1035769 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .4450253 | .2049719 | 2.17 | 0.033* | .2286596 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -5.61e-07 | 5.83e-07 | -0.96 | 0.339 | -.114208 |
| * Sig. p < .05. | | | | | |
| R-squared .0809. | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .0325. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .11415. | | | | | |

In 2004, turnout percentage of voting age population emerges as the only significant variable in either equation, with positive coefficients indicating that the percentage of both Democratic and Republican vote which is cast nonprecinct increases as turnout increases. Chronologically, this is the first time that a significant effect for nonprecinct voting is observed. This is also the first election in which absentee voting by mail was unrestricted; however, the lack of discrete data on mail voting as distinct from One Stop do not allow for conclusions as to the specific effect which mail voting, as

[88] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election. The data are subject to the same limitations and omissions described in Footnote 87, above.

opposed to increased use of One stop may have had on the percentages of vote cast nonprecinct in this case.

The next section of the analysis will examine the election of 2008, the first election in which separate data are available for One Stop voting and voting by mail.

TABLE 6.16: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop in 2008 as the dependent variable. (n=68)[89]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .3526103 | .2261854 | 1.56 | 0.124 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.019028 | .0290589 | -0.65 | 0.515 | -.1173477 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.002376 | .0007309 | -3.25 | 0.002** | -.4848474 |
| High school graduation rate | .0041329 | .0021591 | 1.91 | 0.060 | .291053 |
| Poverty rate | -.000052 | .0036693 | -0.01 | 0.989 | -.0031967 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -1.53e-06 | 1.30e-06 | -1.17 | 0.245 | -.153464 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .2677801 | .1578213 | 1.70 | 0.095 | .2077282 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .02698
Adjusted R-squared .1980
Root MSE .07311.

TABLE 6.17: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop in 2008 as the dependent variable. (n=68)[90]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .2223134 | .2539142 | 0.88 | 0.385 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0163033 | .0330326 | -0.49 | 0.623 | -.0870121 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0007629 | .0008812 | -0.87 | 0.390 | -.1347321 |
| High school graduation rate | .0033997 | .0025423 | 1.34 | 0.186 | .2071942 |
| Poverty rate | -.0008178 | .0043081 | -0.19 | 0.850 | .0435011 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.34e-06 | 1.72e-06 | -1.36 | 0.178 | -.2033356 |

[89] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Missing observations are due to missing data for party control of 13 county commissions, 19 counties for which education and poverty data were unavailable, and five counties which did not separately report Election Day and nonprecinct voting (with some overlap among the three groups).

[90] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. The data are subject to the same limitations and omissions described in Footnote 89, above.

| TABLE 6.17 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .1676253 | .2017508 | 0.83 | 0.409 | .1125325 |
| R-squared .0911. | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .0017. | | | | | |
| Root MSE .0946. | | | | | |

No variables emerge as significant for Republican use of One Stop voting in this election, while only white percentage of voting age population emerges as significant for Democratic use of it, with a negative coefficient indicating that counties with higher percentages of white population saw lower rates of One Stop voting among Democrats, but not Republicans.

TABLE 6.18: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast absentee by mail in 2008 as the dependent variable. (n=68)[91]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0768809 | .0467665 | -1.64 | 0.105 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0108938 | .0169054 | 0.64 | 0.522 | .1264668 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0001379 | .0003153 | 0.44 | 0.663 | .052972 |
| High school graduation rate | .0014286 | .0007203 | 1.98 | 0.052 | .1893766 |
| Poverty rate | -.0010062 | .0016598 | -0.61 | 0.547 | -.1164241 |
| Voters per site | 1.07e-06 | 9.79e-07 | 1.09 | 0.278 | .2026451 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | -.0315137 | .0486551 | -0.65 | 0.520 | -.0460186 |
| R-squared .1372 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .0523 | | | | | |
| Root MSE .04222 | | | | | |

TABLE 6.19: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast absentee by mail in 2008 as the dependent variable. (n=68)[92]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.03553 | .0440361 | -0.81 | 0.423 | . |

[91] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. The data are subject to the same limitations and omissions described in Footnote 89, above.

[92] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. The data are subject to the same limitations and omissions described in Footnote 89, above.

| TABLE 6.19 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Democratic commission | -.0130804 | .0060562 | -2.16 | 0.035* | -.2883347 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0002134 | .0002029 | 1.05 | 0.297 | .1556692 |
| High school graduation rate | .0010406 | .0005576 | 1.87 | 0.067 | .2619298 |
| Poverty rate | .0002105 | .0005812 | 0.36 | 0.718 | .0462459 |
| Voters per site | 6.09e-07 | 2.76e-07 | 2.21 | 0.031* | .2186164 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | -.0210322 | .0437394 | -0.48 | 0.632 | -.058317 |

R-squared .3285.
Adjusted R-squared .2625.
Root MSE . 01962.

No variables were significant in the equation examining Democratic voters' use of voting by mail, while for the equation examining Republicans, Democratic control of the county commission was significant with a negative coefficient, indicating lower levels of mail voting for the Republican candidate in these counties. The voters per site variable was significant with a positive coefficient, indicating that greater proportions of Republican votes are cast by mail in counties where One Stop voting is relatively less convenient. It may be that Republican voters, but not Democrats, were significantly influenced to vote by mail instead of One Stop in this election if the latter option was less accessible. This could be interpreted as a greater preference for mail voting by Republicans than by Democrats.

The next set of equations will examine the use of One Stop voting and voting by mail by different partisans in 2012.

TABLE 6.20: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop in 2012 as the dependent variable. (n=100)[93]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0385511 | .2186728 | 0.18 | 0.860 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0155447 | .023001 | 0.68 | 0.501 | .0741898 |

[93] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

| TABLE 6.20 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White percentage of VAP | -.0022243 | .0007649 | -2.91 | 0.005** | -.3718787 |
| High school graduation rate | .0066445 | .0024658 | 2.69 | 0.008** | .332974 |
| Poverty rate | .0015482 | .0027447 | 0.56 | 0.574 | .069788 |
| Voters per site | 3.38e-07 | 9.72e-07 | 0.35 | 0.729 | .0329204 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .2429347 | .1436692 | 1.69 | 0.094 | .1449073 |
| R-squared 0.2523 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared 0.2041 | | | | | |
| Root MSE .09391 | | | | | |

TABLE 6.21: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop in 2012 as the dependent variable.[94]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.1206349 | .2275481 | -0.53 | 0.597 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0259443 | .0229347 | 1.13 | 0.261 | .12741 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0004942 | .0007079 | 0.70 | 0.487 | .0850256 |
| High school graduation rate | .0055341 | .0025086 | 2.21 | 0.030* | .2853614 |
| Poverty rate | .0007829 | .0028816 | 0.27 | 0.786 | .03631 |
| Voters per site | -5.31e-07 | 1.12e-06 | -0.48 | 0.635 | -.0532555 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .1901508 | .1676633 | 1.13 | 0.260 | .1167073 |
| R-squared = 0.1145 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R-squared .0574 | | | | | |
| Root MSE = .09933 | | | | | |

In 2012, the high school graduation rate variable is significant and positive for both Democratic and Republican voters, indicating that counties with higher levels of education have higher levels of One Stop voting, regardless of candidate preference. As was also true in 2008, the white percentage of the county's voting age population is significant and negative for the percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop, indicating a higher proportional use of this option by Democratic voters who are in counties with larger percentages of minority populations. No other variables reached significance in either equation. The larger R-squared value indicates that more variation is explained by these variables in the percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop than Republican,

[94] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

which indicates that Democratic use of this practice may be more volatile while Republican One Stop voting is less susceptible to variation according to political or (with the exception of education) socioeconomic conditions.

The next section of the analysis considers partisan use of voting by mail in 2012.

TABLE 6.22: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Democratic vote cast by mail in 2012 as the dependent variable. (n=100)[95]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0099138 | .0516745 | -0.19 | 0.848 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0032545 | .0046539 | -0.70 | 0.486 | -.0899244 |
| White percentage of VAP | .0002279 | .0002556 | 0.89 | 0.375 | .2206091 |
| High school graduation rate | -.000096 | .0005229 | -0.18 | 0.855 | -.0278552 |
| Poverty rate | -.0000994 | .0004518 | -0.22 | 0.826 | -.0259385 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -2.41e-07 | 1.24e-07 | -1.95 | 0.054 | -.136223 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .0670608 | .0398951 | 1.68 | 0.096 | .2315815 |

R-squared .1344.
Adj. R-squared .0785.
Root MSE .01745.

TABLE 6.23: Multivariate regression equation using the percentage of Republican vote cast by mail in 2012 as the dependent variable. (n=100)[96]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | 0168292 | .0498276 | 0.34 | 0.736 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0074492 | .0053742 | -1.39 | 0.169 | -.1874858 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0000443 | .0002301 | -0.19 | 0.848 | -.0390456 |
| High school graduation rate | .0001352 | .0005384 | 0.25 | 0.802 | .0357194 |
| Poverty rate | -.000706 | .0004851 | -1.46 | 0.149 | -.1678121 |
| Voters per One Stop site | 1.76e-07 | 1.66e-07 | 1.06 | 0.293 | .0902905 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .0657403 | .0375545 | 1.75 | 0.083 | .2067888 |

R-squared .1491
Adj. R-squared .0942
Root MSE .019.

[95] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.
[96] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

No variables were significant in either of these equations, indicating that the use of mail voting by either party's supporters is not greatly affected by any of the variables of interest. As has been previously stated herein, this may be an artifact of the declining use of mail voting, as opposed to Election Day or One Stop voting, in North Carolina. While the Republican mail voting equation for 2008 showed more significant variation than did the Democratic, the partisan difference appears to have vanished by 2012.

The next section of the analysis will examine possible differences in Democratic and Republican use of Same Day Registration in 2008 and 2012. The dependent variable is the difference between the percentages in change from the previous election in Democratic and Republican registration, respectively, produced by SDR.

TABLE 6.24: Multivariate regression equations using differences in use of Same Day Registration between registered Democrats and registered Republicans, 2008 and 2012, as the dependent variable.[97]

| Year 2008 (n=68) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0039766 | .0242412 | -0.16 | 0.870 | . |
| Democratic commission | -.0078187 | .0031792 | -2.46 | 0.017* | -.316146 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0005102 | .0001309 | -3.90 | 0.000** | -.6826215 |
| High school graduation rate | .0003063 | .0002886 | 1.06 | 0.293 | .1414245 |
| Poverty rate | .0004455 | .0003892 | -1.14 | 0.257 | -.1795327 |
| Registered percentage VAP | .0402242 | .0164902 | 2.44 | 0.018* | .2439035 |
| Voters per site | 2.82e-07 | 1.75e-07 | 1.62 | 0.111 | .1859776 |
| One Stop percentage of vote | -.0007468 | .0182346 | -0.04 | 0.967 | -.0054401 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared .3499.
Adjusted R-squared .2741.
Root MSE .01061.

| Year 2012 (n=100) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0039362 | .0157552 | 0.25 | 0.803 | |
| Democratic commission | -.0023073 | .0014099 | -1.64 | 0.105 | -.171636 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0001996 | .0000526 | -3.80 | 0.000** | -.5202106 |
| High school graduation rate | .0000116 | .0001943 | 0.06 | 0.953 | .0090369 |

[97] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, County Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

| TABLE 6.24 CONTINUED | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Poverty rate | .0001239 | .000243 | 0.51 | 0.611 | .0870532 |
| Registered percentage of VAP | .0132744 | .0126159 | 1.05 | 0.295 | .1488636 |
| Voters per site | 9.44e-08 | 6.29e-08 | 1.50 | 0.137 | .1434203 |
| One Stop percentage of vote | -.0037222 | .008403 | -0.44 | 0.659 | -.0554379 |

* Sig. p < .01.
R-squared .2459.
Adjusted R-squared .1885.
Root MSE .00608.

| Both years (n=168) | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0245677 | .013086 | 1.88 | 0.062 | |
| Democratic commission | -.004191 | .0017704 | -2.37 | 0.019* | -.205852 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0003545 | .0000663 | -5.35 | 0.000** | -.5964979 |
| High school graduation rate | -.000079 | .0001765 | -0.45 | 0.655 | -.0423417 |
| Poverty rate | -.0005153 | .0002164 | -2.38 | 0.018* | -.2491432 |
| Registered percentage of VAP | .0255092 | .0112355 | 2.27 | 0.025* | .1889581 |
| Voters per site | 1.54e-07 | 8.79e-08 | 1.76 | 0.081 | .1430412 |
| One Stop percentage of vote | .0001761 | .00923 | 0.02 | 0.985 | .0016645 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared .2140.
Adjusted R-squared .1796.
Root MSE .00925.

The most significant and influential variables observed here are socioeconomic rather than those related to election reform. The Democratic advantage in SDR is lowest in counties with higher percentages of white voting age population. In 2008 and for the overall model, but not for 2012, Democratic commission control is significant with a negative coefficient, indicating an even lower Democratic advantage in counties with Democratic commissions. In 2008 and for the overall model, but not for 2012, the registered percentage of voting age population is significant with a positive coefficient. However, it does not appear that Democrats use SDR significantly differently than do Republicans. Hypothesis Five is therefore not supported.

Nonprecinct voting, in particular One Stop, has substantially increased for all groups of voters in North Carolina in the past five presidential elections. Hypothesis Six

predicted that Democratic voters would take substantially greater advantage of these opportunities than their Republican counterparts. It appears that Democrats have increased their use of One Stop voting to a greater extent than Republicans. While the raw numbers appear to indicate that mail voting has grown more among Republican voters than among Democrats, a statistically significant difference between partisans' use of it cannot be established. Hypothesis Six is therefore supported with respect to One Stop voting, but not with respect to mail voting.

Thus far, the present research has examined the effects of the availability of easier registration and voting on overall levels of registration and turnout; the extent to which these reforms may be differentially implemented according to partisan control of the county commission; and the extent to which adherents of the different parties choose to utilize these reforms differently. The next chapter, the final chapter of findings, will examine the final effect of these reforms: To what extent have they affected the actual outcome of presidential elections in North Carolina?

# CHAPTER SEVEN: PARTISAN EFFECTS OF ELECTION REFORM

The preceding chapters have examined the effects of election reform on participation, including registration and turnout, and differences in the use of these reforms by partisan groups and in different partisan contexts. This chapter will explore the political effects of election reform, with particular attention to how the use of same day registration and One Stop voting affected the results in 2008 and 2012. As has been stated previously, Barack Obama very narrowly won North Carolina in 2008, becoming the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry the state in 32 years. Although he failed to carry North Carolina in his 2012 re-election bid, Obama's showing still improved upon those of the Democratic candidates in the earlier period examined by this study. This chapter will examine the extent to which election reform contributed to Obama's victory, and has made the state more politically competitive in presidential elections in general.

The partisan effects of election reform will be examined using the Democratic presidential candidate's vote share as a dependent variable. The analysis begins with a series of bivariate correlations between Democratic vote share and various factors related to registration, turnout and voting. The first bivariate analyses present the correlations with individual election years, and with the county's socioeconomic and election reform characteristics.

TABLE 7.1: Bivariate correlations of Democratic vote share with election year and with election reform and socioeconomic characteristics, 1992-2012. [98]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Year 1992 | .019 | .649 | 100 |
| Year 1996 | .037 | .360 | 100 |
| Year 2000 | -.032 | .433 | 100 |
| Year 2004 | -.083 | .041* | 100 |
| Year 2008 | .067 | .102 | 100 |
| Year 2012 | -.008 | .855 | 100 |
| Democratic commission | .670 | .000** | 335 |
| White percentage of voting age population | -.375 | .000** | 600 |
| Registered percentage of voting age population | .105 | .010** | 600 |
| Turnout percentage of registered voters | -.143 | .000** | 600 |
| Turnout percentage of voting age population | -.008 | .840 | 600 |
| High school graduation rate | -.036 | .544 | 281 |
| Poverty rate | .491 | .000** | 281 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -.126 | .012* | 401 |
| Percentage of vote cast nonprecinct | .128 | .008** | 425 |

* Sig. $p < .05$; ** sig. $p < .01$.

The year variables are not significant except for 2004, but the direction of the signs over time simply indicates the Democratic candidate's relative fortunes in each successive election: positive (but unsuccessful) in 1996, reflecting the closeness of Clinton's loss in the state that year; positive in 2008, reflecting Obama's win; and negative in the other years, reflecting the respective losses of Gore, Kerry, and Obama's re-election bid. The strongest correlation, not surprisingly, is that between Democratic vote share and Democratic control of the county commission, given that voters who choose a Democrat for one office are more likely to choose a Democrat for another. The poverty rate is also moderate, positive and significant, indicating a higher Democratic vote share in poorer counties. The white percentage of the county's voting age population is moderately, negatively and significantly correlated with Democratic vote share, indicating that counties with higher proportions of nonwhite voters are more likely to

[98] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

support Democrats. The percentage of vote cast nonprecinct and the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites are both significant and in the expected direction; it has been observed herein that Democrats take greater advantage of nonprecinct voting, that the greater relative availability of One Stop voting makes nonprecinct voting more likely, and that Democratic counties are more likely to make these resources available. Education level is not a significant correlate with Democratic vote share.

The correlations with registration and turnout statistics provide an interesting contrast. The registered percentage of voting age population is significantly and positively correlated with Democratic vote share, while the turnout of registered voters is significantly and negatively correlated with it, and there is no significant correlation with turnout of VAP. It would appear that counties with higher Democratic vote shares have larger proportions of registered voters, but lower turnout rates among those who are registered. Registration, not turnout, would seem to be the primary obstacle for Democratic voters in these counties.

The next section of the analysis presents correlations between Democratic vote share and percentage of registration change:

TABLE 7.2: Bivariate correlations between Democratic vote share and registration change since previous presidential election, 1996-2012. [99]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Democratic | .253 | .000** | 500 |
| Republican | .074 | .097 | 500 |
| Unaffiliated/Other | .175 | .000** | 500 |
| White | -.149 | .001** | 500 |
| Black | -.056 | .215 | 497[100] |
| Total | -.050 | .265 | 500 |

[99] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.

[100] Graham County is excluded during the elections when there was a single black registered voter there.

TABLE 7.3: Bivariate correlations between Democratic vote share and registration change produced by Same Day Registration, 2008-2012. [101]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Democratic | .459 | .000** | 200 |
| Republican | .319 | .000** | 200 |
| Unaffiliated/Other | .125 | .077 | 200 |
| White | .268 | .000** | 200 |
| Black | -.013 | .856 | 200 |
| Total | .371 | .000** | 200 |

** Sig. $p < .01$.

With respect to the percentage change over four years, it is not surprising to find a significant, positive correlation between change in Democratic registration and the Democratic candidate's vote share, although the absence of a countervailing negative correlation with Republican registration is notable. There are also significant correlations between Democratic vote share and four-year registration change among unaffiliated voters (positive) and white voters (negative). The total four-year registration change produces no significant correlation with Democratic vote share.

The percentage change produced by Same Day Registration produces different results. The correlation with Democratic registration is again positive (and stronger), while the correlation with white voters changes its sign from negative to positive. The correlation with Republican registration goes from insignificant to significant (and positive), while the correlations with unaffiliated and total voters do the opposite. There is no significant correlation with black registration change in either case. It is noteworthy that the Democratic vote share is positively correlated with both Democratic and Republican registration change produced by SDR, indicating that the existence of SDR

[101] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

may benefit Democrats regardless of the partisanship of the voters who choose this option.

The next section of the analysis explores the correlations between Democratic vote share and voting method. The percentage of vote cast on Election Day covers the entire five-election period examined; the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct in those cases produces correlations of exactly identical strength and significance, and opposite direction. The 2008 and 2012 elections are categorized by separate categories for One Stop and absentee by mail.

TABLE 7.4: Bivariate correlations with Democratic vote share and voting method, 1996-2012. [102]

| | | Sig. | N |
|---|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast on Election Day | -.137 | .005** | 425 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast on Election Day | -.075 | .122 | 425 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast One Stop (2008-2012) | .438 | .000** | 196 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast One Stop (2008-2012) | .095 | .186 | 196 |
| Percentage of Democratic vote cast by mail (2008-12) | -.051 | .476 | 196 |
| Percentage of Republican vote cast by mail (2008-12) | -.052 | .472 | 196 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -.126 | .012* | 401 |

Of greatest interest here are the moderate, positive, significant correlation between the Democratic vote share and the percentage of those votes which were cast One Stop in 2008 and 2012, and the weak, negative, significant correlation between Democratic vote share and the percentage of those votes cast on Election Day over the course of the five elections from 1996 to 2012. There are no countervailing correlations in the opposite direction for Republican voting method. This demonstrates the relative volatility of Democratic vote share, compared to Republican, as a result of the increased availability of nonprecinct voting, in particular One Stop voting in 2008 and 2012. While

[102] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.

the presence of other candidates on the ballot, and the ability to write in a candidate who did not qualify for the ballot, do not make the voter's choice entirely binary, the Republican vote share can effectively be interpreted as the inverse of the Democratic vote share. It does not appear that the Republican percentage of the vote is affected by the method in which it is case, since the variables related to Republican vote by method do not produce significant results.

The relative availability of One Stop voting is also significantly correlated with Democratic vote share, with the expected negative correlation with the ratio of potential voters per site indicating that an easier opportunity to vote One Stop increases the percentage of the Democratic vote which is cast by that method. Reflecting the decreasing use of the mail voting option in North Carolina during the period examined, there is no significant correlation between Democratic vote share and either party's percentage of vote cast by mail. As has been previously observed in this work, few North Carolinians now choose to vote by mail, even in the absence of an excuse requirement; the overwhelming majority of votes are cast in person, whether at a One Stop site or at a polling place on Election Day.

The next section of the analysis will apply multivariate regression using the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote as the dependent variable, using election years as dummy variables and then using election reform and socioeconomic variables.

TABLE 7.5: Multivariate regression analysis using Democratic percentage of vote as the dependent variable, and year dummies as independent variables. (n=600, with 1992 as the omitted category)[103]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .4447 | .009435 | 47.13 | 0.000 | . |
| Year 1996 | .0047 | .0139662 | 0.34 | 0.737 | .0162245 |
| Year 2000 | -.0124 | .01422 | -0.87 | 0.384 | -.0428049 |
| Year 2004 | -.0243 | .0140895 | -1.72 | 0.085 | -.0838839 |
| Year 2008 | .0113 | .0146979 | 0.77 | 0.442 | .0390077 |
| Year 2012 | -.0063 | .0155707 | -0.40 | 0.686 | -.0217477 |

R-squared .0116
Adjusted R-squared .004.
Root MSE .10779.

In this equation, no individual year variable reaches significance. This is likely due to the relatively small variation in Democratic vote share over the elections examined, as illustrated in particular by the extremely small adjusted R-squared.

TABLE 7.6: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic vote share as the dependent variable with socioeconomic and election reform factors as independent variables (2000, 2008, 2012). (n=280)[104]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .6114541 | .0665975 | 9.18 | 0.000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0058095 | .0002899 | -20.04 | 0.000** | -.8605587 |
| Poverty rate | -.0000288 | .0010134 | -0.03 | 0.977 | -.0012204 |
| High school graduation rate | .0018829 | .0007245 | 2.60 | 0.010** | .1079222 |
| Voters per One Stop site | -8.29e-08 | 1.36e-07 | -0.61 | 0.542 | -.0155264 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .2391873 | .0615641 | 3.89 | 0.000** | .1721015 |

R-squared .7166.
Adjusted R-squared .710.
Standard error of the estimate .06161.

[103] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.
[104] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.

The county's white percentage of voting age population is by far the strongest (negative) influence on Democratic vote share, substantially exceeding any other socioeconomic factors or election-related variables. Turnout of voting age population is also significant with a positive coefficient, indicating a Democratic benefit from increased turnout, but the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites is not significant, which indicates that the relative availability of One Stop voting is not necessarily a factor; increased turnout benefits Democrats by whatever method the vote is cast. The high school graduation rate is also significant and positive, indicating a higher Democratic vote share in counties with higher average levels of education. The county's poverty rate is not a significant variable in this equation.

The next model introduces additional variables representing various aspects of partisanship and election reform, including nonprecinct voting, party control of the county commission, and the effects of Same Day Registration.

TABLE 7.7: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic vote share as the dependent variable with additional socioeconomic and election reform factors as independent variables (2000, 2008, 2012). (n=280)[105]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0355006 | .1100254 | -0.32 | 0.747 | . |
| Democratic commission | .0656773 | .0103581 | 6.34 | 0.000** | .2743977 |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0036509 | .0004108 | -8.89 | 0.000** | -.524682 |
| Poverty rate | .0042176 | .0011942 | 3.53 | 0.001** | .1731245 |
| High school graduation rate | .0041593 | .0008431 | 4.93 | 0.000** | .1947194 |
| Voters per One Stop site | 1.10e-06 | 3.80e-07 | 2.90 | 0.004** | .0868019 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .1070762 | .0430674 | 2.49 | 0.014* | .0802157 |
| Net change from SDR | 1.445178 | .3569094 | 4.05 | 0.000** | .1559705 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .3581093 | .0607584 | 5.89 | 0.000** | .1894241 |

* Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.

[105] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Election.

TABLE 7-7 CONTINUED
R-squared. 8383.
Adjusted R-squared .8304.
Root MSE .0494.

All of the variables included in this equation achieve significance. While the white percentage of the county's voting age population remains the strongest (negative) influence on Democratic vote share, its effect is substantially diminished from that seen in the previous equation. Democratic control of the county commission has, unsurprisingly, the strongest positive influence, while each of the other variables also affects Democratic vote share. Positive effects are observed from the additional socioeconomic variables, related to education and poverty, which once again produce the seemingly paradoxical finding that Democratic vote share is highest in both counties with the highest levels of education and those with the highest levels of poverty. The election variables related to registration, turnout, and the use of nonprecinct voting are also significant with positive coefficients. The relative availability of One Stop voting, as seen in the ratio of potential voters to sites, is unexpectedly positive; this may be an artifact of a greater Democratic vote share in larger counties, with larger populations served by proportionately fewer One Stop sites. The extremely high R-squared and adjusted R-squared values indicate that this equation explains a substantial majority of the variance in Democratic vote share over the course of the elections examined; on the whole, both socioeconomic and election-related factors can be seen to play a substantial role in determining levels of support for the Democratic candidate.

An analysis of turnout patterns reveals that One Stop voting now accounts for the overwhelming majority of non-precinct voting (and, in 2008 and 2012, a majority of the votes cast in the state overall), while it appears that removing the restrictions on absentee

voting by mail has produced little effect on its frequency of use. However, a longitudinal analysis of this is hampered by the lack of consistently separate data for One Stop and absentee voting in 2000 and 2004. It can be established that most nonprecinct voting in 1996 was absentee by mail, and most in 2008 and 2012 was One Stop, but the lack of intermediate data makes it impossible to illustrate the trend of change with any reliability.

The analysis will now turn to a series of multivariate regression equations examining the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote in each individual election. As has been stated in previous chapters, it was not possible to construct a single equation incorporating the year, election and socioeconomic variables due to collinearity issues resulting from missing observations of some data.[106]

TABLE 7.8: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic candidate's percentage of vote in 1992 as the dependent variable. (n=100)[107]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .6594033 | .0332421 | 19.84 | 0.000** | . |
| White percentage of VAP | -.537472 | .0335007 | -16.04 | 0.000** | -.9216615 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .3964041 | .0624348 | 6.35 | 0.000** | .3231255 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared 0.6539.
Adjusted R-squared 0.6468.
Root MSE .05607.

Both variables used in this equation achieve significance. The white percentage of voting age population is the most influential (and negative), while the turnout percentage of voting age population has a positive coefficient, indicating that a higher proportion of turnout in these counties benefits Democratic candidates.

[106] Democratic control of the county commission was not used as a variable in these equations due to high collinearity with the dependent variable.
[107] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.

TABLE 7.9: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic candidate's percentage of vote in 1996 as the dependent variable. (n=100)[108]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .7468179 | .0375918 | 19.87 | 0.000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0056653 | .0003405 | -16.64 | 0.000** | -.9050587 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .3161146 | .0844433 | 3.74 | 0.000** | .2018507 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared 0.6996.
Adjusted R-squared 0.6934.
Root MSE .05701.

As is the case with the previous equation, both of the variables used achieve significance, and in the same direction. The Democratic percentage of the vote is again substantially lower in counties with higher percentages of white voting age population, while higher turnout benefits the Democrat, although to a lesser extent than in 1992, which likely reflects the lower overall turnout in the 1996 election than in its predecessor.

The next equation introduces the election reform and socioeconomic data variables which were not available for the previous elections.

TABLE 7.10: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic candidate's percentage of vote in 2000 as the dependent variable. (n=100)[109]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .3917724 | .1351157 | 2.90 | 0.005 | |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0053449 | .0004787 | -11.16 | 0.000** | -.8363989 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .3577485 | .090138 | 3.97 | 0.000** | .1998734 |
| Poverty rate | .006278 | .0020636 | 3.04 | 0.003** | .2537916 |
| High school graduation rate | .0024031 | .001252 | 1.92 | 0.058 | .1419717 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .1015954 | .0853793 | 1.19 | 0.237 | .059689 |

[108] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections.
[109] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. The variable representing the ratio of potential voters to the number of One Stop sites was omitted from this equation, because it resulted in a missing observation for Columbus County, for which the number of sites used in this election could not be determined from the available data. When included in the equation (n=99), the VPS variable was insignificant.

TABLE 7.10 CONTINUED
** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared = 0.7706.
Adjusted R-squared 0.7584.
Root MSE = .05229.

A similar pattern to the previous election is observed with respect to race and turnout. The county's poverty rate also works to the Democratic candidate's benefit, as seen by its positive coefficient. The education variable is not significant here. The percentage of vote cast nonprecinct is also not significant, indicating that in the first election where One Stop voting was universally available, its use did not substantially affect the Democratic candidate's fortunes. This can also be interpreted to mean that, in this election, there is not yet a divergence between Democratic and Republican voters' choices of voting method.

TABLE 7.11: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic candidate's percentage of vote in 2004 as the dependent variable. (n=99)[110]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .5480242 | .0562352 | 9.75 | 0.000 | . |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0056486 | .0004032 | -14.01 | 0.000** | -.9167803 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .5705672 | .1338189 | 4.26 | 0.000** | .3435562 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .0121982 | .0754036 | 0.16 | 0.872 | .0138189 |

** Sig. p < .01.
R-squared 0.6607.
Adjusted R-squared 0.6500.
Root MSE .06219.

The racial and turnout variables produce the same results in this election as have been previously observed, with higher Democratic percentages observed in counties with

[110] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections. Education and poverty data were not available for this election year, and Lee County did not separately report Election Day and nonprecinct votes. The Voters per Site variable was included in the original model, but was insignificant and was subsequently removed.

lower proportions of white population and higher proportions of voter turnout. Here again, the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct does not significantly affect the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote. While this was the first election in which absentee voting by mail was available without restriction (and, as previously noted, in which it was used most frequently among the elections examined), it does not appear that nonprecinct voting (whether One Stop or by mail) influenced the partisan outcome.

TABLE 7.12: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic candidate's percentage of vote in 2008 as the dependent variable. (n=80)[111]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | -.0589045 | .1783634 | -0.33 | 0.742 | |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0043872 | .0006929 | -6.33 | 0.000** | -.656554 |
| High school graduation rate | .0050947 | .0013546 | 3.76 | 0.000** | .2641218 |
| Poverty rate | .005412 | .0020742 | 2.61 | 0.011* | .2348507 |
| Voters per One Stop site | 7.41e-07 | 7.90e-07 | 0.94 | 0.351 | .054137 |
| Nonprecinct percent of vote | .0903768 | .0776678 | 1.16 | 0.248 | .0774778 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .453643 | .1118172 | 4.06 | 0.000** | .2440212 |
| SDR registration change | .7919449 | .7438547 | 1.06 | 0.291 | .0835828 |

Sig. p < .05; ** sig. p < .01.
R-squared = 0.7637.
Adjusted R-squared 0.7407.
Root MSE = .05717.

In this election, the white percentage of voting age population continues to negatively affect the Democratic vote percentage, but to a lesser extent than was observed in previous elections. Turnout percentage continues to work to the Democratic candidate's favor, as do the education and poverty variables, all significant with positive coefficients. The election reform variables do not, however, have a significant effect

[111] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau. Lee County did not separately report Election Day and nonprecinct votes in this election, and education and poverty data were unavailable for 19 counties.

here; neither the net change in registration caused by SDR, nor the ratio of potential voters to One Stop sites, appears to have partisan implications.

TABLE 7.13: Multivariate regression equation using Democratic candidate's percentage of vote in 2012 as the dependent variable. (n=100)[112]

| | B | Robust SE | t | Sig. | Beta |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Constant) | .0568214 | .1633598 | 0.35 | 0.729 | |
| White percentage of VAP | -.0054542 | .0004253 | -12.82 | 0.000** | -.7749934 |
| High school graduation rate | .0055441 | .001503 | 3.69 | 0.000** | .2361164 |
| Poverty rate | .0046342 | .0016722 | 2.77 | 0.007** | .1775297 |
| Turnout percentage of VAP | .3233032 | .0874182 | 3.70 | 0.000** | .1638929 |
| One Stop percentage of vote | .1421295 | .0505244 | 2.81 | 0.006** | .1154246 |

R-squared = 0.8036.
Adjusted R-squared = 0.7931.
Root MSE = .05634.

All variables are significant in this equation, and explain a substantial majority of variation in the Democratic vote share. The white percentage of the county's voting age population continues to negatively affect the Democratic candidate's percentage, while turnout, percentage of vote cast One Stop, education and poverty are all significant with positive coefficients, indicating that each of these factors adds to that percentage. This is the only election among those examined for which complete data were available for all of the variables used in the equation, and thus this equation arguably provides the most accurate model available for examining the effect of each of these factors on the subject in question.

Hypothesis Seven posited that Same Day Registration, increased availability of One Stop voting, and the unrestricted availability of absentee voting would benefit the Democratic candidate to a greater extent than the Republican candidate. The 2008 model

[112] Analysis conducted by the author using data provided by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, county Boards of Elections, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

indicates that, contrary to expectations, SDR did not have a significant effect on Obama's vote share in the state; nonprecinct voting in general and the relative availability of One Stop voting had no effect on Democratic vote share throughout the elections examined, although the percentage of vote cast One Stop did significantly and positively affect Democratic vote share in 2012. Therefore, Hypothesis Seven is not supported except with respect to the use of One Stop voting in 2012.

The final chapter of the work will tie together the various aspects of election reform which have been individually examined here, and will examine the effects of different factors (socioeconomic, political and structural) on the process of registration and voting as a whole. Chapter Eight will also consider the implications of the legislation enacted in August 2013 which repeals or significantly curtails the availability of many of the reforms considered here.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This dissertation intended to answer the following research question: What effects have election reforms, specifically no-excuse One Stop early voting, no-excuse absentee voting by mail, and same day voter registration, had on participation in, and the results of, presidential elections in North Carolina? Legal-institutional theory, the theoretical basis of the present work, argues that nonparticipation by potential voters is due primarily to structural factors such as barriers to registration and to voting itself. The reforms enacted in North Carolina since 1999 have reduced many of those barriers. A potential voter no longer needs to visit his or her assigned polling place during a thirteen-hour time period on a particular weekday in November in order to participate; no longer needs an excuse to vote absentee by mail; and, until same day registration was repealed in 2013, no longer needed to register 25 days in advance of the election, but was able to do so in a single step – "One Stop" – while voting early. If the legal-institutional theory is correct, significant increases in participation should have resulted from the implementation of these reforms. The present work has found this to be generally true in North Carolina. Participation in presidential elections has increased as these reforms have been implemented, even controlling for the substantial growth in the state's population during the time period examined.

The dissertation examines the presidential elections of 1996 (pre-reform), 2000 (the first with widely available One Stop voting), 2004 (the first when an excuse was not

necessary to vote absentee by mail), 2008 (the first when it was possible to register and vote in a single step during the early voting period), and 2012 (the second election with all three reforms in place). It operationalizes an examination of the theory through a series of Ordinary Least Squares regression equations whose dependent variables were the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct (and specifically cast One Stop and by mail in 2008 and 2012); registration of voting age population; turnout of registered voters; turnout of voting age population; Democratic and Republican percentages of vote cast nonprecinct; and the Democratic presidential candidate's share of the vote in each election. The primary independent variables represent population characteristics (white percentage of voting age population, percentage of the county's population under the poverty line, and percentage of those 25 and older who are high school graduates), as well as variables designed to operationalize the various aspects of election reform: the net effect of same day registration as a percentage of the county's total number of registrants, and the number of potential voters per One Stop site as a measure of the convenience and relative availability of One Stop voting in a particular county, with a smaller number of voters per site indicating relatively greater convenience and accessibility. Robust standard errors were utilized to correct for heteroskedasticity, and the Durbin-Watson test for autocorrelation was used with the time series models. Each of these equations and findings will be discussed in turn.

Also of concern to the present work is the issue of resources devoted to the implementation of reform. While the laws regarding registration and voting are uniform throughout the state, elections are administered at the county level and funded by partisan county commissions. At the time of its enactment, One Stop voting, in particular, was

perceived by both Democratic and Republican partisans as benefiting the Democratic Party and its candidates and voters. Therefore, it might be expected that Democratic-controlled county commissions would devote a greater share of resources to the implementation of One Stop voting in order to maximize their party's advantage, while their Republican counterparts would devote less resources in order to make One Stop voting relatively less convenient and minimize the perceived Democratic advantage resulting from it. The effects of partisan commission control on the implementation of early voting were operationalized in the form of a variable denoting Democratic party control of the county commission (where such information could be obtained).

This, the concluding chapter of the work, will begin with a review of the hypotheses previously stated in Chapter Three, and a report of the findings with respect to each. It will then discuss the importance of these findings to public policy, and make policy recommendations.

Hypothesis One: Counties with Democratic control of the commission will devote greater resources to facilitate nonprecinct voting than other counties, in the form of more early voting sites than those with Republican-controlled commissions (during the years in which early voting is considered). Hypothesis 1A: This will produce greater use of nonprecinct voting in these counties. This was tested with a multivariate analysis using the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct as the dependent variable, and Democratic commission control as an independent variable. The bivariate analysis indicated a significant negative correlation between Democratic control of the county commission and the numbers of potential voters per One Stop site, indicating a greater commitment to One Stop voting in Democratic counties, but commission control did not consistently

emerge as a significant predictor of the percentage of vote cast nonprecinct, and was not a significant predictor of the use of same day registration or of turnout of either registered voters or voting age population. Although differences in partisan use of alternative voting methods were detected, party control of the commission was not a significant influence in that case. Democratic commission control did emerge as a significant predictor of registered percentage of voting age population, with a positive coefficient indicating a greater percentage registered in those counties, but this did not translate into significantly greater turnout. Socioeconomic factors, most predominantly education level, were more consistently significant than party control in predicting the use of nonprecinct voting. (Absentee voting by mail was not considered as a separate category here. The assumption is that any county will make an absentee ballot available to any voter who requests it, regardless of party control of the commission. The production and mailing out of absentee ballots does not require a funding commitment on the level of opening and maintaining One Stop voting sites throughout the early voting period.) Hypothesis One is therefore supported, but Hypothesis 1A is not supported.

Hypothesis Two: The availability of same day registration will significantly increase voter registration. This was tested with a multivariate regression using registered percentage of voting age population as the dependent variable and the percentage of registrants who used SDR as an independent variable. The bivariate analysis found no significant correlation between same day registration and the percentage of voting age population who are registered. There was a significant negative correlation observed between same day registration as a percentage of the county's total registration, and the percentage of those who are registered. This would seem to be a preliminary indication

that SDR has had a greater effect in counties with lower existing registration levels, but that it has not served to close the gap in registration between these counties and those with higher existing percentages of eligible voters who are actually registered.

The bivariate analysis found weak, significant, positive correlations between turnout percentage of registered voters and percentages of various groups (Democrats, unaffiliated and white) who are same day registrants (and thus automatically One Stop voters), indicating that SDR has served to slightly increase turnout among these groups. However, in the multivariate analysis, SDR (as a percentage of total registrants) did not emerge as a significant variable in predicting registered percentage of VAP. The education variable was the most consistently significant and influential, indicating that socioeconomic factors are again more important in predicting voter participation than the effect of this particular reform which is designed to make registration and voting easier. The relative availability of One Stop voting was also not a significant factor in predicting registered percentage of VAP. Hypothesis Two is therefore not supported. (The potential effects of the 2013 repeal of SDR will be discussed below.)

Hypothesis Three: The availability of same day registration, One Stop voting and no-excuse absentee voting by mail will significantly increase turnout of registered voters. This hypothesis is not supported. While registration and turnout have increased in North Carolina, this trend is observable throughout the time period examined, including the pre-reform era. Election reform may have added to this trend, but there is no evidence that Same Day Registration, One Stop voting, or absentee voting by mail were significantly responsible for it.

Hypothesis Four: The availability of same day registration, One Stop voting, and no-excuse absentee voting by mail will significantly increase turnout of voting age population. This hypothesis is not supported, for the same reasons discussed in the previous paragraph with respect to Hypothesis Three.

Hypothesis Five: The availability of same day registration will increase Democratic registration to a significantly greater degree than Republican registration, Although Democratic registration increased to a markedly greater degree than did Republican due to SDR in 2008, Democratic SDR also declined by a much sharper degree in 2012. The bivariate analysis indicated no overall significant difference between Democratic and Republican patterns or percentages of registration using SDR (although the effects on turnout by the two groups are different, as will be discussed below). The Democratic pattern of use of SDR appears to be more volatile than the Republican, but the net effect appears to be essentially the same for the two groups. Partisan control of the commission is significantly correlated with the percentage of registrants who are affiliated with each party, but the effect is not greater for one party than the other. The multivariate analysis indicated that year 2008 (positive coefficient) and white percentage of voting age population (negative coefficient) were the most significant variables in determining the percentage of voters who are same day registrants. Election reform factors, such as the relative availability of One Stop voting (which is necessary for SDR) were not significant. Hypothesis Five is therefore not supported.

Hypothesis Six: Different partisan groups will differentially use the opportunities provided by election reform. In particular, Democratic voters will take significantly greater advantage of nonprecinct voting (both One Stop and absentee by mail) than

Republican voters, and the difference will be greater in Democratic-controlled counties. There are observable differences in the way in which supporters of the Democratic and Republican candidates, respectively, have chosen to take advantage of the opportunities for alternative voting methods provided by election reform. One Stop voting for the Democratic candidate was significantly and positively correlated with the percentages of several different groups of voters who were same day registrants, while the bivariate correlation with One Stop voting for the Republican candidate was significantly correlated only with the percentage of Republicans who used SDR. This indicates that SDR does play a greater role in the Democratic candidate's vote total than it does in the Republican's. The multivariate regression, however, indicated that the education variable was the most significant and influential predictor of the Democratic candidate's vote percentage, followed by SDR as a percentage of total registration, both with positive coefficients. White percentage of VAP, with a negative coefficient, was also significant and influential. It appears that both population characteristics (race and education) and election reform factors (use of same day registration) affect the use of One Stop voting for Democratic candidates. Partisan control of the commission, percentage under the poverty line, and the relative availability of One Stop voting were not significant factors in this equation. Only the education variable was significant in predicting the percentage of the Republican candidate's vote which was cast One Stop, indicating (as has been discussed previously within this work) that education is the most significant predictor of voting regardless of the voter's preference, while use of One Stop voting for the Democratic candidate is affected by factors which are not relevant for One Stop voting for the Republican.

With respect to voting by mail in 2008 and 2012, the education (negative coefficient) and same day registration (positive coefficient) variables are significant as predicting the percentage of Democratic vote cast this way, but no variables are significant in predicting the percentage of Republican vote which is cast by mail. As previously observed, SDR and mail voting are mutually exclusive, which indicates that the greater use of SDR actually decreases the Democratic use of mail voting.

Hypothesis Six is supported with respect to greater overall Democratic use of One Stop voting, but not absentee voting by mail. Absentee voting by mail appears to be more frequently used by Republican voters than by Democrats, and therefore this section of the hypothesis is not supported.

Hypothesis Seven: Same day registration, One Stop voting, and no-excuse absentee voting by mail will benefit the Democratic candidate for president to a greater degree than the Republican candidate, and this effect will be greater in counties with Democratic control of the commission. This was measured in a multivariate regression equation using the Democratic candidate's percentage of the vote as the dependent variable. Hypothesis Seven posited that Same Day Registration, increased availability of One Stop voting, and the unrestricted availability of absentee voting would benefit the Democratic candidate to a greater extent than the Republican candidate. The 2008 model indicates that, contrary to expectations, SDR did not have a significant effect on Obama's vote share in the state; nonprecinct voting in general and the relative availability of One Stop voting had no effect on Democratic vote share throughout the elections examined, although the percentage of vote cast One Stop did significantly and positively affect

Democratic vote share in 2012. Therefore, Hypothesis Seven is not supported except with respect to the use of One Stop voting in 2012 (when Obama actually lost the state).

To summarize the findings of this study, election reform does not appear to have been implemented differently in counties where Democrats, as opposed to Republicans, control the commission which determines the funding available to the Board of Elections. This indicates that all prospective voters, regardless of their party affiliation or the predominant affiliation in their community, have had a relatively equal opportunity to take advantage of these reforms. Same day registration has increased registration for certain populations in certain circumstances, predominantly minority communities in the election year of 2008, but has not significantly increased registration overall. There was a Democratic advantage in SDR in 2008 which largely disappeared by 2012, so no long-term partisan effect can be determined to result from it. Once a voter is registered, however, the availability of One Stop and no-excuse absentee voting have had a significant effect on turnout. Democrats have chosen to take greater advantage of One Stop voting (though the gap is shrinking), and Republicans have chosen to take greater advantage of no-excuse voting by mail, though the overall number of mail ballots is declining, as more Republicans who do not wish to vote on Election Day choose One Stop rather than mail voting. Republicans maintain an advantage in traditional Election Day polling place voting.

Voter turnout has consistently increased in presidential elections in North Carolina since One Stop voting was introduced, and One Stop voting has now exceeded Election Day voting as a method of choice in the state. This would seem to indicate that there is some validity to the legal-institutionalist argument that nonvoting is caused by

structural barriers such as difficulties in registering and actually being able to cast a ballot. Removal of these barriers is, for some potential voters, both necessary and sufficient for their participation. However, this work has found that, in the elections studied, education has been the most consistently significant predictor of both voting in general and nonprecinct voting in particular. This is consistent with the findings of Gronke and various co-authors (Gronke and Galanes-Rosenbaum 2005; Gronke, Bishin, Stevens and Galanes-Rosenbaum 2005; Gronke, Hicks and Toffey 2009). It would thus appear that the increased availability of opportunities to vote has not increased the probability of less-well-educated citizens actually doing so. At the very least, this does not disprove the behavioralist argument made by Berinsky (2005) and Fitzgerald (2005), among others, that early voting has increased the socioeconomic stratification of the electorate.

The recurring significance of the county's white percentage of voting age population and its education level in the equations presented herein indicate that socioeconomic factors may remain more important than election reform in determining one's likelihood of registering and voting, and for whom. The county's level of poverty is inconsistent in its significance with respect to various types of election reform. It is significant (with a positive coefficient) with respect to the percentage of the vote cast nonprecinct over the five elections examined, but not when the equation is modified to control for heteroskedasticity, and not in the models specifically examining One Stop voting in 2008 and 2012. Poverty is significant (with a surprisingly positive coefficient) as a predictor of registered percentage of voting age population, but not significant with respect to the use of same day registration. It is significant, with a negative coefficient,

and the most influential factor in the equations predicting turnout of registered voters, but not with respect to turnout of voting age population. It thus appears that those below the poverty line may be more likely than others to register but not subsequently vote. Poverty does not appear to significantly affect a voter's choice of voting method, whether the vote is cast for the Democratic or the Republican candidate. The poverty level is significant, with a positive coefficient, as a predictor of the Democratic candidate's vote share, but not when the equation is adjusted to account for heteroskedasticity.

Does the increased availability of the opportunity to register and vote reduce the Downsian "costs" of participation for significant numbers of potential voters? Most studies of early voting have found that its effect on voter turnout is, at best, marginally positive, and in some cases, actually negative. North Carolina appeared to have been an exception, but the variables employed herein do not attribute a significant effect specifically to election reform. The two Obama campaigns' mobilization efforts in North Carolina were beyond the scope of the present study; however, their effects cannot be ignored. One cannot dismiss the arguments by Jackson (1996) and Southwell (2006) that voting for some citizens requires both mobilization and a choice which they perceive to be a meaningful one. Obama (very) narrowly won the state in his first race and narrowly lost it in his second one. Perhaps Gronke, Hicks and Toffey's (2009) argument applies to North Carolina: the historic nature of Barack Obama's 2008 campaign produced effects in the state which could not subsequently be duplicated by him or anyone else. The present study's findings would seem to indicate that eliminating the registration barrier, rather than the voting barrier, has a greater partisan effect. Same Day Registration was considerably more widely used in 2008 than in 2012, while One Stop voting has

consistently grown with each successive presidential election (despite a slight reduction in the number of One Stop sites from 2008 to 2012). Nonetheless, the small variation in voting patterns observed by the present study may have a long-term effect in making North Carolina more politically competitive in national elections.

By operationalizing a variable representing the number of potential voters per One Stop site, the present study was able to investigate partisan differences in the implementation of One Stop voting in counties whose commissions were controlled by Democrats and by Republicans. While Democratic counties implemented One Stop voting in a way which produced a significantly smaller number of potential "voters per site," which would thus appear to indicate greater convenience, availability, and ease of access to the process in these counties, the study found that this did not translate into an automatic partisan advantage.

This work has set out to explore a variety of factors related to election reform and its implementation in North Carolina. Of interest have been, first, the effect which partisan considerations, as represented by control of the county commission, might play in the implementation (or lack thereof) of reforms such as same day registration and One Stop voting. It does not appear that partisan factors have directly affected this implementation, although the effects have been observed in other ways, as described above. Also of interest was the effect of election reform on political participation, in the form of voter registration and ultimately the act of voting itself. The work has concluded that One Stop voting, the ability to vote at a location other than one's assigned precinct polling place, has significantly increased participation and has had a long-term effect for supporters of both Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. Same day

registration has had a significant effect only in one election with a unique set of political circumstances. It cannot (yet?) be shown to have had a lasting effect on political behavior or participation.

The conclusion to be drawn is that, in comparing the effects of the two dependent variables examined herein, the availability of nonprecinct voting has had a greater (and long-term) impact on turnout, while the availability of same day registration has produced greater (short-term) partisan benefit for the Democratic candidate. Both of these reforms benefited Obama in both of his campaigns; however, the decrease in Democratic same day registration from 2008 to 2012, accompanied by the increased use of One Stop voting by Romney supporters, appears to have erased his victory margin in 2012. The extent to which these two reforms may moderate each other's effects, and the fact that these findings are not consistent with those of most other authors who have investigated these practices, are important subjects for future research.

The enactment of election reform has produced partisan differences in the way groups of voters choose to express their preferences. Since the introduction of One Stop voting in North Carolina, Democrats have been more likely to use it than Republicans. This did not make a difference in the partisan outcome of a presidential election until 2008, and the difference disappeared in 2012. The use of One Stop voting has also grown among Republicans as well as Democrats, while the use of Election Day voting has declined less among Republicans than among Democrats. While One Stop voting and same day registration contributed significantly to Barack Obama's victory in North Carolina in 2008, election reform cannot be said to have produced a long-term advantage for the Democratic Party. Reform has made North Carolina an even more politically

competitive state than it was previously. The partisan advantage goes not automatically to one side or the other, but to whichever side is better able to mobilize its supporters and take advantage of the increased availability of political participation.

It would appear, from the results of this work, that both institutional and behavioral theories of political participation bear some validity. Structural barriers to registration and voting have been reduced or removed altogether. Some previous nonvoters have chosen, or have been able, to take advantage of these structural reforms and join the participating electorate. Others have chosen to continue to abstain from political participation. The institutional theory would appear to apply to the former group, and the behavioral theory to the latter. Universal political participation in the United States will not occur without large-scale change in the orientation of many Americans to their government and their sense of political efficacy. This is beyond the scope of simply changing the manner in which elections are implemented and administered. Nonetheless, structural reform has indeed had a significant impact in a state with a history of low voter participation and a history of intentional, legally sanctioned disenfranchisement based on race. This impact should not be ignored or minimized simply because it has failed to be felt universally.

A democratic system of politics and government requires citizen participation. A government cannot be truly representative of the people it serves if access to that participation is limited. Reforms to widen electoral participation and to improve voting technology have had the common goal of making the voting electorate more representative of the population as a whole, and thereby making elections a more accurate expression of the views of the community. The American democracy should be stronger

if these reforms have accomplished their goals. In addition, to the extent that increased participation affects the results of elections and the popular choice of leaders, these reforms will have large implications for public policy, because elections ultimately determine the policies which the system of government pursues and adopts. These issues therefore pose significant questions to be explored within the fields of politics and public policy, and the research undertaken herein has sought to make an intellectual and policy contribution to these fields of inquiry by exploring and assessing the effectiveness and impact of these policies.

## Policy Prescriptions and Epilogue

There are a variety of potential outcomes for this research which could lead to substantive recommendations to policymakers. In the long term, each voting reform may, or may not, be shown to achieve its desired effect of increasing both overall voter participation and the representativeness of the voting population as it relates to the population as a whole. In this case, the reforms should continue in place. The reforms may complement or conflict with each other, i.e., one reform could be found to increase participation while another tends to decrease it. These findings would lead to policy recommendations to continue, discontinue, or amend the availability of each new practice individually. If the reforms are found to be largely ineffective, then whatever small-scale benefits might be observed likely cannot justify the substantial added time and expense to the election authorities of administering an election that takes place over weeks rather than on a single day. In this case, if the polity wishes to increase political participation, it must look elsewhere for an effective method of doing so. Findings as to the effectiveness of campaign mobilization in conjunction with these new opportunities for participation

would lead to strategy recommendations to future campaigns, candidates and strategists as to how to tailor one's message and outreach in order to maximize the political gain to be obtained from the availability of these new forms of participation to one's particular supporters.

There are, of course, potential partisan effects as well. Given the perception that election reform in North Carolina has consistently benefited Democratic candidates, when the Republican Party took control of the General Assembly following the 2010 elections, and the governorship in 2012, a move was made to undo those reforms or curtail their availability. On Aug. 13, 2013, Gov. Pat McCrory signed Session Law 2013-581, which makes sweeping and significant changes to North Carolina election laws and procedures, effective beginning in 2014. Much of the content of the legislation is beyond the scope of the present study; among other provisions, it implements a photo identification requirement for voting, effective in 2016 (General Statutes 163-166.13); effective in 2014, it increases the opportunity for political party representatives or others to challenge a voter's eligibility at the polling place (General Statutes 163-87); eliminates a preregistration program for 16- and 17-year-olds (repealing parts of General Statutes 163-82, sections 1, 3 and 4); eliminates straight party ticket voting (General Statutes 163-165[e]); eliminates public funding of certain elections (repealing parts of General Statutes 163-22); and limits the circumstances under which a provisional ballot will be counted (General Statutes 163-55).

Of particular interest to this study are the potential effects of this legislation on the three election reforms examined herein. The only changes which the law makes to absentee voting by mail are a new requirement that the ballot be witnessed by two people

when it is executed (General Statutes 163-229[b]) and slight changes to the procedure for applying for an absentee ballot (General Statutes 163-230.1). Same day registration is entirely eliminated (repealing much of General Statutes 163-82.6A). The first week of the One Stop voting period is eliminated; however, counties which operated multiple One Stop sites (in addition to the Board of Elections office or other single location) are required to offer One Stop voting in the primary and general election for the same number of total hours during which it was available during the corresponding primary and general election period in 2012 (the "total" being the cumulative number of hours at each site in the county). This may be achieved by any combination of extending the number of hours each site is open, or increasing the number of sites (General Statutes 163.227.2, subsection g2). The legislation was enacted shortly after the U.S. Supreme Court removed the Voting Rights Act's formula for requiring U.S. Justice Department approval of changes to voting procedures in jurisdictions where race-based electoral discrimination had historically occurred (*Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013). This made it possible for the law to be put into place without the state having to first rebut claims that it discriminated against African-American voters. Early voting and same day registration have reportedly been used disproportionately by black citizens, and thus they would be particularly disadvantaged by the reduction of one and the elimination of the other (a claim which was beyond the scope of the present study to evaluate). (Gordon 2013).

The primary stated purpose of the legislation is to eliminate voter fraud, a problem the law's supporters describe as "rampant and undetected." (Gordon 2013; Christensen 2013) The potential policy consequences of these changes have been the subject of intense debate. While Same Day Registration peaked after its introduction in

2008 and tapered off significantly in 2012, its repeal would still potentially depress voter participation by returning the process of registration and voting to two steps, taken at least 25 days apart, rather than in "One Stop" at an early voting location. Public interest groups have described the law as "motivated to stop people from voting." (Hair, as quoted in Morrill 2013) North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper argues that "this law makes registering and voting more difficult for many people." (Cooper, as quoted in Morrill 2013) It is impossible to predict the effect of the changes to the early voting law without knowing how counties will choose to meet their obligations under it to match the number of total hours in which early voting was previously offered. If counties offer more early voting sites during a shorter period of time, turnout may not be significantly affected. If counties offer longer hours on a shorter number of days at the same number of sites, it is possible that turnout might increase among those who find their county's existing hours of One Stop voting inconvenient (which would not, however, prevent them from casting an absentee ballot by mail). The elimination of same day registration cannot possibly contribute to an increase in political participation, but only a decrease. The minor alterations to the laws concerning absentee voting by mail will likely affect only a small proportion of the voting population, given the limited use of mail voting in recent elections in the state.

It would be extremely unfortunate, and anti-"small-d" democratic if those whose ability to participate was made possible by election reform had that ability taken away by policymakers who simply did not agree with the outcome of the newly-empowered voter's decisions.

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# VITA

John Thomas Roddey Holder
Born: Rock Hill, South Carolina, May 11, 1962.
Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania, 1985.
Master of Arts in Political Science, The George Washington University, Washington, D.C., 1990.
Master of Philosophy in Political Science, The George Washington University, 1993.

Co-author (with Angela Roddey Holder), *The Meaning of the Constitution*, Barrons Educational Series, 1997.

Adjunct faculty member (Lecturer/Instructor) in Political Science, Winthrop University, Rock Hill, South Carolina, 1995-2005, 2007-2008, 2012-present.

Graduate Teaching Fellow in Political Science, The George Washington University, 1991-1994.

Professional Associations:
American Political Science Association
Southern Political Science Association
North Carolina Political Science Association (Executive Board member, 2013-present)
South Carolina Political Science Association